Deuteronomy, a devotional commentary.
222.15 B856d 116832
Buckland, Augustus Robert,
Life Pacific College Alumni Library

THE NEW

A. R. BUCKLAND, M.A.

A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY

222.15
B856d

Buckland, Augustus Robert
Deuteronomy.

LIFE Pacific College
Alumni Library
1100 West Covina Blvd.
San Dimas, CA 91773

L.I.F.E. SCHOOL LIBRARY
[redacted]k

DATE DUE

MAY 2 9 1986			
SEP 19 1995			
GAYLORD 234			PRINTED IN U. S. A.

LIFE Pacific College
Alumni Library
1100 West Covina Blvd.
San Dimas, CA 91773

L. I. F. E. SCHOOL LIBRARY

DEUTERONOMY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY ON ST. PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY ON ST. PAUL'S SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

Uniform with this Volume

A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY
Edited by the Rev. C. H. IRWIN, D.D.

DEUTERONOMY

A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY

BY

THE VEN. A. R. BUCKLAND, M.A.
Archdeacon of Norfolk and Canon Residentiary of Norwich

845

LONDON
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY
MANCHESTER, TORONTO, MADRID, LISBON
AND BUDAPEST

222.15
B856
c.1

L.I.F.E. College Library
1100 Glendale Blvd.
Los Angeles 26, Calif.

222.15
B

First published in 1930
(*All Rights Reserved*)

Made in Great Britain

222.15
B

222.15
B56d
L.I.F.E. College Library
1100 Glendale Blvd.
Los Angeles, Calif. 90026

CONTENTS

PAGE

I

THE BOOK AND ITS MESSAGES 9
Deut. i. 1–5

II

A VARIED RETROSPECT 14
Deut. i. 6–46

III

DIRECTIONS FOR PEACE AND WAR 18
Deut. ii.–iii. 17

IV

THE PEOPLE'S LOT AND THE LEADER'S LOT . . 21
Deut. iii. 18–37

V

REMEMBER, OBEY, TRANSMIT 25
Deut. iv

VI

THE COVENANT LAW 30
Deut. v

VII

PROSPERITY'S PERILS 35
Deut. vi

VIII

A "PECULIAR PEOPLE" 40
Deut. vii

CONTENTS

PAGE

IX

REMEMBRANCE OF PAST MERCIES 45
Deut. viii

X

SINS RECALLED 50
Deut. ix

XI

RENEWAL 54
Deut. x

XII

EXPERIENCE AND ITS PLEA 58
Deut. xi

XIII

GUIDANCE OFFERED 63
Deut. xii. 1–28

XIV

THE WAY OF OBEDIENCE 67
Deut. xiii.–xiv. 21

XV

THE LAW OF THE TITHE 71
Deut. xiv. 22–29

XVI

DEBTORS ALL 74
Deut. xv

XVII

THE THREE PILGRIMAGES 79
Deut. xvi. 1–17

CONTENTS

PAGE

XVIII

FENCING THE FAITH 83
Deut. xvi. 21–xvii. 7

XIX

HIGH OFFICE, GREAT RESPONSIBILITY 87
Deut. xvi. 18–20 ; xvii. 8–xviii

XX

THE REFUGE CITIES 91
Deut. xix. 1–13

XXI

NATIONAL, SOCIAL, AND PERSONAL DUTIES . . . 95
Deut. xix. 11–xxii. 12

XXII

GUIDANCE FOR PERSONAL AND SOCIAL LIFE . . 99
Deut. xxii. 13–xxv

XXIII

THANKSGIVING, PROFESSION, APPEAL 104
Deut. xxvi

XXIV

MEMORIALS FOR ALL 108
Deut. xxvii. 1–8

XXV

THE SINNER DENOUNCED 111
Deut. xxvii. 9–26

XXVI

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE: I 115
Deut. xxviii

CONTENTS

PAGE

XXVII

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE: II 119
Deut. xxix., xxx

XXVIII

MOSES AND JOSHUA 123
Deut. xxxi. 1–15

XXIX

THE SONG OF MOSES 127
Deut. xxxi. 16–xxxii. 43

XXX

THE END OF THE TASK 130
Deut. xxxii. 44–52

XXXI

THE LAST BLESSING 133
Deut. xxxiii

XXXII

"HE, BEING DEAD, YET SPEAKETH" . . . 137
Deut. xxxiv

I

THE BOOK AND ITS MESSAGES

Deut. i. 1–5

The Method of Treatment.—This commentary is not concerned with the critical questions raised as to Deuteronomy or any other Book in the Old or the New Testament. It deals with each simply as a part of those Scriptures which are "able to make men wise unto salvation," and indeed, as the Church of England Article of Religion puts it, contain "all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." For this reason there will here be no discussion of many points to which in other works the attention of the Bible reader is naturally directed. But, in passing them by, there is no disparagement either of their interest or their importance; there is only a recognition that this is a Devotional Commentary, the aim and purpose of which are entirely distinct from those of the ordinary critical or exegetical work.

—*Invited by the Book Itself.*—This entire separation of the practical from the critical study of the Book is the more reasonable because Deuteronomy in many ways invites such treatment. It is, from some points of view, essentially a book for the times. Its main subjects are subjects upon which greater concentration of thought is manifestly needed in our day. It has been well said that it is a book of national religion, of personal religion, and so of universal religion. Its insistence upon the being and authority of the One God is in open protest

against the worship of gods many and lords many that men make out of ambitions, possessions, and even out of indulgencies and follies. Its presentation of God's peculiar care for Israel, and of the benefits showered by Him upon them, shames the blindness or the self-confidence which takes all the gifts of life with thoughtless acquiescence, owning no Creator, no Providence, and no Judge before Whom account of the use of all must one day be rendered. Its appeal to Israel as a nation, which by reason of God's relation to them and goodness to them, should be His faithful servants, suggests reflection upon our own national mercies and our own shortcomings. Its detailed directions as to social and personal responsibilities invite the servant of God unceasingly to remember his duties to man. Its tender and persuasive dealing with Israel, in respect of attitude towards God and obedience to His laws, foreshadows the pleading, by word and deed, by life and death, of " a greater than Moses "

Law and the Virtue of Obedience.—Moreover, Deuteronomy recalls the majesty of law and the virtue of obedience thereto. Christianity is sometimes presented in terms that obscure the existence of divine law, the reality of sin, and, by consequence, man's need of a Saviour. It becomes a kind of *placebo*, a soothing physic, of itself, as to the body, inoperative, but accepted by the patient as full of potency. Deuteronomy calls for another and more exact presentation of the Gospel. Again, it challenges the tendency of many, who clamorously insist on the right to " live their own lives," to live wholly for the day, to make light of high ideals and recognised standards of conduct and duty. The conditions of our time call aloud for emphatic statement of the law as well as of the Gospel.

Two Great Figures in the Book : Jehovah is One.—Two great figures, one supreme and one great but subordinate, are before us throughout this Book. The supreme figure

is that of Jehovah, the One true God. Israel had been in contact, and would again be in contact, with nations owning the sway of other deities. There was always danger that there should be found in Israel " man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away . . . from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations " (xxix. 18). The supremacy of Jehovah, Israel's God, His spirituality, His choice of the people, His deliverances and mercies so freely given to them, His just anger at their past sins, His assured judgement of future sins, the duty of loving and serving such a God—these and like topics come again and again before the reader.

The Need for More Thought of God.—The times are changed ; but these appeals have not lost their force. Is it not true that we need to think more about God ? There is always a danger that our religious life may centre around human organisation rather than a divine Personality ; that so much interest may be directed to human organisations, their machinery, their prosperity, their methods, that God Himself gets rather out of sight. It is, in fact, much easier to be interested in an organisation than truly to be concerned for the Kingdom of God. It is easier to grow enthusiastic about the prosperity and progress of a Church, a parish, or a Society than really to be concerned for the souls of men. Deuteronomy, with its iterated appeal to remember " the Lord your God," is an excellent corrective of this tendency.

—*As Our Own God.*—The times are changed in another way. No longer is Jehovah thought of as peculiarly the God of Israel in contrast with the gods of other nations. He is the God for every nation. But, with all this, we shall do well to recapture, if one may put it so, the proprietary spirit so conspicuous in Hebrew thought about Jehovah. God must be for us more than a God or the God ; He must be for each our own God—our own by personal covenant and rite, our own by realised personal association ; " my lord and my God " in the sense

expressed by a convinced Thomas, " my God " as claimed with conviction and confidence by St. Paul.

The Other Figure : Moses.—The other figure, great but subordinate, is that of Moses, one of the most impressive personalities in the records of any nation. He who reverently studies the life of Moses, and more particularly his work as it is presented in Deuteronomy, will again and again be led up and on from Moses to the " greater than Moses," our Lord Himself. Both were law-givers, but with a difference. Each led others to a promised land, one the foreshadowing of the other, and one so poor in comparison of the other. Moses did not enter the land he saw ; Christ went to " prepare a place " for His people. Each lived for the people, but Christ died for them, and Moses did not. Moses must needs preface his message with " Thus saith the Lord " ; Christ could use another exordium, " But I say unto you."

Use by Our Lord.—In another way this Book at once directs the reader's thoughts towards Our Lord ; for it will be remembered that " when the tempter came to Him " it was from the written words of Deuteronomy that he was answered. Our Lord's replies in Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10 carry us back to Deut. viii. 3 and vi. 16, 13. So also the heavenly Voice, which bade the Apostles " hear Him," recalls the prophecy in Deut. xviii. 15.

The Message to the Nation.—And now in these preliminary verses, 1-5, time and place are stated for the delivery of his messages by Moses. The " words " were spoken unto " all Israel " ; not indeed that all could be present at once and hear at once, but that, through the channel of recognised leaders at first, and then by means of others, the message would reach the nation. If they took it aright, each who heard it or heard of it would accept its words as having a direct and personal reference.

Personal Application called for.—Moses doubtless knew, and knew better than a preacher of to-day, how easy it is for a body of hearers to take in every word of a spoken

message, and, whilst recognising the corporate responsibility, forget somehow to apply it personally. It is in the nature and purpose of a Commentary such as this that it invites the reader to thoughts of personal duty and privilege, it may be of personal failure and shortcomings, of personal difficulties and dangers ; certainly of personal mercies. In this spirit let us follow the narrative.

II

A VARIED RETROSPECT

Deut. i. 6–46

Lessons of the Backward Look.—Few can look back upon their own experience of " the changes and chances of this mortal life " without finding in the retrospect things to deplore, mistakes and failures, mingled with mercies that point to the goodness of God in ordering our ways, and perhaps to our blindness in not at once seeing His guiding hand or acknowledging the wisdom of His discipline. In this retrospect are some things that may stir in us also memories of the past that may help us in the days to come.

Moving on.—Here, then, Moses at once confronts us with the experience of a people constantly on the move. " Turn you and take your journey " (ver. 7) was, for a long time in the history of Israel, a recurring command. It is, in one way or another, a command that comes to most of us. Life in our time is far less settled than it was in the days of our fathers and our grandfathers. Perhaps there is too little settlement and too much unrest. It is to be seen in town life ; it is still more obvious in the life of the countryside. A restless spirit may be an unprofitable spirit, though the old proverb that " a rolling stone gathers no moss " may be dismissed with the lighthearted comment that nobody now wants to be moss-grown. But changes ask for no criticism if they are changes for the better, and moving on is right enough for us if only it be under guidance. When the call comes, " turn you and take your journey," we need not scruple to obey when the summons plainly is from God. From Him some day must come the summons to take the last journey of all.

—*With a Prospect.*—But before the obedient is a prospect, " Go in and possess the land " (ver. 8). To Israel it was a great promise, and a promise of long standing ; to a people who had been dwellers in a strange land under a foreign yoke, it should have been a promise of singular appeal and potency. But with Israel the present was often more powerful than the distant prospect ; and so it may be with us. Whatsoever is ahead of those who are rightly guided is for them something they are invited to " go in and possess." And better than earthly prospects is the heavenly land, with the " place " which our Leader has gone to " prepare " for His people, a promised land wherein are no Anakim (ver. 28), for " there shall in no wise enter into it " (Rev. xxi. 27) any of man's moral or spiritual foes.

Dangers and Trials by the Way.—But in life's journey every moving on must bring new responsibilities, with accompanying temptations and trials. It is only the young and inexperienced, or the foolish and thoughtless, who suppose that there is some other position or occupation or condition in which, if they could reach it, everything would be all right and nothing amiss. Israel passed from one trial to another, despite the provision of chosen leaders, " wise men and understanding " (ver. 13), " wise men and known " (ver. 15) ; despite the laws and directions, moral and ceremonial, delivered at Sinai (ver. 18). They had to pass through that " great and terrible wilderness " (ver. 19) ; they had to face fearsome enemies, such as were the Amorites and " the sons of the Anakim " (ver. 28). And beyond this, they had to deal with foes of their own making, particularly unbelief, despite all that they had seen of God's mercies to them (vers. 30, 31). Under these trials they failed ; and failing they suffered.

To be met by others also.—Corresponding perils and trials may be met with in the way by any one of us. The finest of human leadership and the best of human guid-

ance may be within reach and may fail in its endeavour to help. The soul may pass through the "great and terrible wilderness" of indifference or of doubt or of absorption in the affairs of everyday life. Powerful enemies may rise up in the form of intellectual unrest or grievous moral temptation. Worst of all, the difficulties and trials of the way may bring in a certain unbelief in the goodness of God, despite recollections of His past mercies.

The Trial of the Hitherto Untried.—There are those who have small experience of severe affliction; to whom life, up to a point, has brought little of extreme anxiety, and nothing, perhaps, of real hardship. If sorrows fall thick upon them, they go in greater spiritual peril than some other folk. It is a new condition, a condition for which their own experience hitherto has not prepared them. They do well to lay fast hold at once of God's promises, to "fear not neither be discouraged." The untroubled past, all the smooth waters of previous life, are things for which to thank God, and not grounds for chafing under discipline.

A Solemn Warning.—The latter part of this chapter, full of solemn warning, at the same time invites us to carry our thoughts on from the Old Covenant to the New, from Moses to Our Lord Jesus Christ, from the law to the Gospel. "Surely," said the Lord, "there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land" (ver. 35). They "could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. iii. 19). Their repentance, when they "returned and wept before the Lord" (ver. 45), came too late, "the Lord would not hearken."

—And Sure Comfort.—The soul that is conscious of its guilt is sometimes moved to fear—as John Bunyan and many another have been—that sin has gone beyond pardon. But side by side with this verdict upon the unbelieving must be set the voices of the prophets that declare again and again the pardon of such as truly repent,

even though the sins have been " as scarlet." Troubled souls that look believingly into the message of Jesus Christ may confidently trust Him to fulfil the promise, " him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out " (John vi. 37). For indeed " if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness " (1 John i. 9). Their doubt of God's mercy comes at times from the pressure of trial and the exhaustion of prolonged anxiety. And strangely enough they do not take their burden to the One Helper. Longfellow teaches a better way :—

" Discouraged in the work of life,
Disheartened by its load,
Shamed by its failures or its fears,
I sink beside the road ;
But let me only think of Thee
And then new heart springs up in me."

III

DIRECTIONS FOR PEACE AND WAR

Deut. ii.–iii. 17

A Combatant People Controlled.—Israel was of necessity a combatant nation ; but it was not allowed to war without discrimination. In this passage there are very explicit directions as to the maintenance of peace in some quarters and the conduct of hostilities in others. The people were not to fight with " the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir " (ii. 5), nor will Jehovah give Israel their land. Nor were they to fight with the Moabites (ii. 9), for they, the children of Lot, were, like the children of Esau, assured of their possessions. Nor might they fight with " the children of Ammon " (ii. 19), for they also, like the Edomites and the Moabites, were allied in blood to the Israelites. Kinship, though distant, was remembered ; the claim of blood was to be respected, and the promises of Jehovah to be honoured.

—*And Encouraged in Warfare.*—There were others for Israel to war with as foes. There was Sihon, king of the Amorites (ii. 24), upon whom a merciless and terrible vengeance was to be taken (ii. 34). There was Og, the king of Bashan (iii. 2), whose many strongholds availed him nothing against Israel. In after years the poet raises his songs of triumph (Ps. cxxxv. 10-12, cxxxvi. 19-21) over these foes, whose downfall was for him a sign and proof of his God's enduring mercy.

The Claims of Kinship.—In this discrimination there lies a plain acknowledgment of the ties of blood. There are tendencies in our time which make against the existence of any claim founded on such ties. If, it might be argued, all men are brothers, how can one brother

be nearer to us or have larger claim than another brother? The plea for a closer realisation of the all-embracing brotherhood of man is not one to be argued over the records in Deuteronomy alone. Here, at all events, a distinction is made, and the claims of kinship, though distant, are enforced. There is a touch of indignation in St. Paul's words, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house [or kindred], he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. v. 8).

Our Own in Distant Lands.—But apart from all thought of our own immediate ties with others, may we draw from this passage a reminder of a duty which is not universally recognised? Men and women of our own blood have gone out to distant lands, made their homes there and left descendants there. Some settled in countries still under our own flag, and some amongst alien nations, and it may be amongst non-Christian peoples. Some are still cut off from ready access to place of worship, to Christian ministry, to any Church organisation. They need remembrance by us, and such help as we can give through the agencies at work to supply their spiritual needs. Here is a duty which is sometimes obscured by other claims. Yet surely it is a poor kind of zeal for the Gospel which would spend freely in sending it to Moslem or other non-Christian peoples and forget our scattered colonists in newer lands. We may not leave either thing "undone."

With Whom to Avoid Conflict.—But in the contrast between the action directed against Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites, and against Sihon, Og, and their people, we may see a suggestion of another kind. May we take it as a reminder to Christian people that their martial ardour should be rightly directed? The forces of the Christian Church are not endowed with inexhaustible resources or tireless energy. What it has should be used aright. On all sides we do well to beware of expending that energy in conflict with those who are Christians

like ourselves, though possibly divided by contrarient convictions as to details of the faith, or methods of worship or forms of Church government. No one can be bold enough to say that occasion for such conflict may never arise, but we can at least seek to avoid it, " as much as lieth in " us living " peaceably with all men."

With Whom to Fight.—For indeed there are foes enough upon whom to expend the fighting strength of the Christian Church. There are Sihons enough, with hearts hardened, ready to obstruct the progress of the Gospel, and ready to " come out against " it. There are lands to-day in which a flagrant anti-religious and anti-Christian campaign is being carried on. There is, perhaps, no land in which the Sihon and Og of gross immorality, of utter selfishness, of calculated injustice will not be found challenging the forces of truth and justice. There are few persons in whom the Sihon and Og of promptings that come of our fallen nature do not invite the vigorous onslaught of the Christian resolution that would keep the body under and " bring it into subjection." Here is ample room for righteous warfare.

Conflict Approved.—Conflict after this fashion is not to be avoided by such as would " fight the good fight of faith." A form of Christianity which is entirely or mainly quiescent and contemplative, seated always, so to speak, " on the carpet of contentment in the corner-of ease," is more comfortable than one which will not only challenge the enemy but will also work diligently for his overthrow. Such conflict, carried on, not in a carping, malicious, or pharisaical spirit, but firmly, reasonably, and with candour, wins respect even from those against whom it is waged. But we need " grace for grace "—continued accessions of grace, wisdom, guidance, patience, charity unceasingly renewed—to wage this conflict aright.

IV

THE PEOPLE'S LOT AND THE LEADER'S LOT

Deut. iii. 18–37

DEUTERONOMY in its opening words brings us face to face with the noble personality of Moses. The Book ends with his death in the land of Moab (xxxiv. 5). And here we are again confronted with his own reminder, more than once returned to, that entry into the promised land is not for him. The people will go over; the leader will not. The sin recorded in Num. xx. 11, 12 bars the way.

The Lot of the People.—The people in due time will pass over; it is according to promise (ver. 18). It might be said of them that they had done nothing to deserve it. There is nothing in the history of the generation that entered the land to raise any question of merit on their side. Nor will man wisely talk of deserts or merit before God. For the wandering tribes, as for believers in later ages, it was always true that "by grace are ye saved . . . and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. ii. 8). The people of old were slow to learn the lesson of their God's goodness. "They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy" (Ps. lxxviii. 42); but not all are entitled to think scorn of them, for it has been so easy to forget the mercies of the days behind us.

—A Happy Lot—on Conditions.—The lot of those who were to pass over should be a happy one; but its happiness depended on the fulfilment of conditions about which Moses would speak in terms of solemn warning. Even so with us every new condition of happiness and blessing is held on conditions. We are tenants at will,

at the will of our God. Our security is with Him, and our own wilfulness or blindness or other perversity may at any time invalidate our tenure. As soon as this is forgotten, and we begin to repose foolish confidence in ourselves—as though all blessing, material or spiritual, came only from our own endeavour—we are in the way to lose our privileges and taste adversity. The Children of Israel had repeated experience of this, but the warning offered by their history is not always taken to heart by others.

The Lot of the Leader.—The happiness offered to the flock is denied to the leader. To Moses himself entry into the good land is denied, though with pathetic earnestness he pleaded for it. To some readers the pathos of the position obscures the truth which the divine verdict now inexorably confirmed (ver. 26) would suggest to the mind. For here is the judgement of God upon sin presented in startling terms. To the people who were present the sin of Moses may have seemed a trifle and a thing soon forgotten. They were wrong; it can have been no trifle; it was not forgotten. "Is it not a little one?" is a Lot-like cry often heard after transgression, but not one to be raised by those who would be faithful. Great as was the work of Moses, in this thing he was not spared, though triumphant entry into the land would have seemed so fitly to crown his long career from the days of confronting Pharaoh until the journey reached its close.

A Task Accomplished.—But there is another side to the picture. The work of Moses, now nearing its close, was no selfish undertaking. When first the call came to Moses from Jehovah, it is the well-being of others that brings the summons—"I have surely seen the affliction of my people" (Exod. iii. 7)—and a task for, a duty towards, them was at once presented, "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people" (Exod. iii. 10). The

work was now done ; it remained only to deliver a final charge. Again and again it seems to some that a leader has been taken away, in human opinion, prematurely, and yet a sounder judgement perceives that his work was finished. The soundest judgement admits that the summons can never be premature.

" *Other Men Laboured.*"—It was with Moses as with so many leaders—they laboured and other men entered into their labours. It is so in almost every department of life, and very often the original toiler is altogether forgotten by succeeding generations who profit by his work. If we could arrange things after our own hearts we should of course alter this, as far as might be possible. We should see that every great worker for faith and virtue, for truth and justice, for the sciences, arts, and crafts that advantage mankind, should, before he died, see the full fruits of his labours. He should himself enter the good land to which he had guided others ; he should see enough to make him feel that the task was worth discharging, that all the struggle and toil, all the resolution and perseverance, were not in vain. Not one of them should say to us, " Let me go over and see the good land," and meet with stern refusal. But, even if we could make it so, events would probably show that we were wrong. God's verdict must have been the right one ; and for Moses He had prepared not " the good land " but a better.

A Ruling Accepted.—And here let us note that Moses received the ruling of Jehovah without resentment or repining. That he was sorry is plain enough ; but he does not give the rein to sorrow and disappointment or chafe under the final decision of his God. Herein he is in striking contrast with many of us. We do not always submit with good grace and the strong conviction that all is well, even though things for the time are hard to bear. We are more disposed, as St. Paul was at first (2 Cor. xii. 8), to ask repeatedly for relief, and but slowly

to enter into the assurance given to the Apostle, " My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness " (2 Cor. xii. 9).

Pisgah Views.—Perhaps we should find more help if we would look, not to the " good land " of immediate relief or happiness, but to the still better land beyond. " Get thee up to the top of Pisgah " (ver. 27) is good advice to the Christian under discipline. Go up and view the land of promise, and consider how joyful a contrast it presents to the land of present enjoyment. Is not the place prepared a goodly one ? The weary pilgrim is, like the storm-tossed mariner voyaging over life's sea, assured of safe arrival there. " So He bringeth them to the haven where they would be."

V

REMEMBER, OBEY, TRANSMIT

Deut. iv

The Cynic on Benefits Conferred.—There are those on whom the appeal to remember past benefits never takes hold. They are the folk of whom the cynic thinks when he says that the way to make a man your enemy is to confer a benefit upon him. If the cynic were always right, his generalisation always just, the world would be a sorry place. For, so far as we can see, it will always be a world in which there will be enough of suffering and sorrow, of actual need and of mental distress, to call for the practice of the Good Samaritan's zeal. If to act as Our Lord's picture of judgement suggests, to succour the stranger, the sick, the prisoner, and all the folk that need aid and consolation, were also to beget malice in return, then " to do good and to distribute " would only be to propagate sin.

His Generalisation Unsound.—But the cynic's generalisation is unsound. He takes the moral weakling as the true representative of all; or he judges the rest of mankind by himself. In any case he is wrong. It is a poor heart that recalls with resentment the benefit conferred; and mankind is not so desperately evil as never to feel or acknowledge gratitude to a fellow. Perhaps—but of this one might not be sure—it is easier with some to forget the mercies of God than the kindness of man; just because their thoughts do not get beyond the human instrument or the circumstances that brought the benefit; or, it may be, because present conditions have bred in them forgetfulness of the past.

The Way of Moses.—Moses was led, again and again,

L.I.F.E. College Library
1100 Glendale Blvd.
Los Angeles 26, Calif.

to impress upon the Children of Israel the duty of remembering the past goodness of God—their God and the God of their fathers, a greater God than the gods they had heard of in Egypt, or the gods of the peoples whom they met in their travels, or the gods of the folk then holding the land that was, by promise, to be Israel's own. He does it with a purpose, aiming at their and not his own advantage, forming out of their past mercies a background for the " statutes " and " judgements " which he now sets before them.

The Note of Warning.—And so, at the start, he recalls the contrasted fates of " the men that followed Baal-peor " (Num. xxv. 4, 5) and those " that did cleave unto the Lord " (vers. 3, 4). In that there was warning. In remembrance of " the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb " (ver. 10) should come the thought of privilege and covenant responsibility. In the contrast of the future that lay before the people and the divine verdict which barred the speaker himself from the promised land (vers. 21, 22) there was pathetic appeal. In the foreshadowing of the just punishment that would inevitably follow lapse from faith and obedience and the drift into idolatry (vers. 25-28) there was solemn warning, followed, as in the voices of the great prophets in later days, with assurance of pardon on repentance (vers. 29, 31). In the concluding appeal to take note of the peculiar privilege they had enjoyed in their God's revelation of Himself and His laws there is a note of amazement and awe. He would have them feel the way in which they had been isolated from other peoples, protected and directed as no others had been, with the assurance of earthly predominance (ver. 38), such as no consideration of their own circumstances and strength could possibly have suggested.

For Ourselves : the Duty of Remembrance.—There is much here which matches our own conditions, dangers, and duties. And first, as to the general duty of recalling

with gratitude God's goodness to us, in whatever detail the circumstances of our own past suggest, but, as the General Thanksgiving in the Book of Common Prayer insists, " above all, for the redemption of the world by Our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace and for the hope of glory." No man or woman was ever yet the worse for recalling with gratitude the times and the ways in which God's very particular and recognised mercies had come. But many a one, in the hour of distress and perplexity, or danger or bereavement, has missed much help and comfort and stimulus to faith from not exercising his memory enough.

Memory's Warnings.—The note of warning would often be sounded by memory. It is a poor mind which learns nothing from its mistakes and their results. They may not be pleasant to recall, but recollection brings its reward if the warning be taken. The one thing that stands in the way of some is the unhappy conviction that, now they are so much more experienced, wiser, and cleverer, the mistake or its consequences can be avoided. That rash self-confidence has led many into danger and so nullified the lesson that memory would teach. The self-confidence sometimes springs from a certain spiritual pride, a thing not unknown in the religious life whether it be in a school of austere simplicity or in one that loves ceremonial. " Take ye . . . good heed unto yourselves " (ver. 15) is therefore a warning for all, for those who have indeed " tasted that the Lord is gracious," no less than for those who may seem not to have been brought so near to Him.

Remembrance—in Israel's Case.—Remembrance should have been for Israel the parent of obedience : obedience to the commands of a God Who had in so wonderful a way succoured them and poured spiritual privileges upon them (vers. 7-13). It was the fashion of peoples then to ascribe their prosperity to their gods. The nations with whom Israel had been and was to be in conflict

would each, no doubt, have held up its particular god as a great and powerful protector. But what were they in comparison with Jehovah? No other nation had been as favoured as they. But obedience was demanded, and, failing obedience, punishment would assuredly follow (vers. 25-28), with pardon ensuing on repentance and amendment (vers. 29-31).

—*And in Ours.*—But if Israel was peculiarly privileged, what shall we say of ourselves? To us is given remembrance of the birth at Bethlehem, of the life of service, of Christ's death on the Cross—all the gracious revelation of the Son of God, "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven . . . and was crucified." Not in the law only is God revealed to us, but in the glad tidings also of Jesus Christ, "in Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

Remember and Transmit.—The duty does not end with remembrance and obedience. There are others to think of beside ourselves. The revelation of God to us is not for personal and peculiar enjoyment and nothing more—as though its virtue ended in ourselves. "Teach them thy sons and thy sons' sons" (ver. 9)—a duty very beautifully enlarged upon in the opening verses of Psalm lxxviii. It seems an obvious duty; and perhaps because it is so obvious is not as fully discharged as it should be.

An Oft-Neglected Duty.—With the slackening of parental control in our day has come in a tendency to leave the religious guidance of the young to be very much a matter of their own choice, and so often to be neglected. It is not surprising that, as a result, there should be a marked decay of many old-fashioned virtues and habits. All the blame does not lie on the shoulders of the young; some of it must be borne by those who forbear to transmit what they have themselves received. Neglect to hand on the precious deposit of truth and faith is not the

way to ensure " that it may go well with thee and with thy children after thee " (ver. 40). Better it is to seek a true succession in faith and obedience, with the blessing promised thereto. For " His mercy is on them that fear Him, from generation to generation " (Luke i. 50).

VI

THE COVENANT LAW

Deut. v

Covenant and Law.—" The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb " (ver. 2)—a binding agreement, of which the Commandments and the keeping of them are terms. Its origin is with God. It is He Who " made a covenant." It does not find its source in any disposition of Israel to pledge itself to faith and duty ; their inclinations point in quite another direction. All is of the goodness and mercy, the grace of Jehovah Himself ; all is of that divine tenderness which speaks later in the words of the prophet, " Incline your ear and come unto Me ; hear and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you " (Isa. lv. 3).

Another Covenant.—So it was with another covenant. Christ, " the mediator of a new covenant " (Heb. ix. 15), came not by the will of man. It was not from appeal of man that " for us men and for our salvation " He " came down from heaven." The impulse is to be found in another and higher quarter : " God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son " (John iii. 16), and thereby " commendeth His love toward us " (Rom. v. 8). St. James puts it in another way when he says, " Of His own will begat He us " (Jas. i. 18). From the language of Moses it is clear that he himself realised the one-sided nature of the movement towards the first covenant ; but the people themselves, though sufficiently stricken with awe for the moment (vers. 22-26), showed imperfect realisation of the condescension and goodness of their God. We may err in like fashion ourselves ; taking our covenant relationship almost as a matter of course.

A Humble Spirit Needed.—It may be that modern Christianity needs a larger infusion of the old sense of unworthiness before God which was so conspicuous in men like John Bunyan. The modern reader may be tempted to think Bunyan's self-abasement overdone. But it sprang from a deep sense, not only of his own sin, but also of the majesty and mercy of God. Certainly it was a better attitude of mind than the hint almost of condescension in the approach of some later Christians. " Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him ? " is still a thought worth reverting to.

Covenant Conditions.—The covenant with Israel is embodied in laws which call for obedience by man, and promises which, on obedience, will surely be fulfilled by God. The laws acknowledge and require the worship of one sovereign Lord and God. The subjects of this sovereign must on their part conform to the regulations of His kingdom. The two duties go together ; they cannot be divided without failure to keep the covenant. No subject can profess to own and serve the One God and still go on violating His moral code. He that would love God must love his fellow-man, for " he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen ? " (1 John iv. 20). Hypocrisy will seek to cover neglect of either duty, but rarely escapes detection by man, and never escapes detection by God. Whatever its subterfuge, it breaks the covenant and leaves the hypocrite alien from the commonwealth of the true Israel.

Arbitrary Obligations.—The covenant obligations have been resented as arbitrary. So, in a sense, they are, for God imposed them without parley or making of terms with the people. Arbitrary, indeed, the commands of authority must often be, whether they are the laws of an autocrat, of a constitutional government, of a master, or of a parent. At the outset their wisdom or justice may not be seen by all ; they may not be fully under-

stood for a time, and only experience may lead some to see how throughly sound the arbitrary directions were. But the arbitrary commands of God are for His people's good ; the profit, as Moses again and again points out, is to be theirs. They do not stand to lose but to gain by obedience.

—*Yet Salutary.*—For all the laws are sound. There is no defect of principle, there are no errors in drafting. They are laws that protect men on their spiritual side of his being, and discipline him on his carnal side. No one can with justice pretend that obedience to them would destroy a state, or disintegrate society, or make a man a bad citizen. No one can fail to see that neglect of them and open violation of them has bred in the end nothing but moral decay, social strife, and all the blackest crimes that stain our poor human records. Israel forgot this ; so have many others. But it is true nevertheless.

Christ and the Decalogue.—In our own time there has grown up a disposition to set the Decalogue aside, and to substitute for it the briefer statement used by Our Lord Himself. But is there any ground for the belief that He disallowed the Ten Commandments ? Is there —in the enactments themselves—anything which we can suppose Our Lord to have wished to disallow or to weaken the force of ? The laws themselves remain unaffected in essentials, so far as we are concerned, by His treatment of them. With Him, as with Moses, their origin and authority is divine. " Honour thy father and mother " is, for example, " the commandment of God " (Matt. xv. 4, 6). Observance of them is required if a man would " enter into life " (Matt. xix. 17). In the kingdom of heaven order and place will turn on the measure of such obedience (Matt. v. 19). How, then, can we suppose that Our Lord would have us set aside the very laws upon the observance of which He Himself insisted ?

The Old Law Newly Presented.—But did Our Lord

leave the position in regard to the Decalogue just as He found it? Not at all; He left to His people a new conception of these laws, a conception the hold of which upon the minds of men seems to grow in firmness, despite, from time to time, the determined drift of nations, or sections of nations, into flagrant antinomianism. The old laws were, by Our Lord, newly presented; presented indeed in a form which widened their application. When before "the multitudes" He offered a contrast, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . But I say unto you" (Matt. v. 21, 22), He was not invalidating the old law, but only giving it deeper meaning. And this was in the spirit of the words He had just spoken, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law . . . I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. v. 17).

Old Accretions Cleared Away.—This fulfilment required the clearing away of much which had gathered around the law and obscured its true purpose. So much had been made to hang upon ritual observance; so much had been added by way of traditional interpretation or expansion; so much, in fine, had grown up that was merely human invention and not divine enactment, that restatement was needed. But it will be noted that when Our Lord puts the old into a new form it is never to its detriment, and when He would summarise the code He does it, not in some entirely fresh form, but in words taken from Deut. vi. 5 and Lev. xix. 18.

Christ and the Moral Law.—No one, in any Christian community, questions the value of the moral law as stated by Our Lord Himself. But all will not help to get His application of it accepted. It is still so easy for men to think that, if there be no actual infringement of human law, no harm has been done. It is so hard to get many natures to see that God must deal with something more than bare infringement of the law's letter; that He requires observance of the spirit; that not merely the deed done but the thought that went before it, and all

the defects of character that made the thought as well as the deed possible, must come up for judgement with Him. Fitly enough do many of us use often the prayer, " Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit." If only we could say with truth, " I hate vain thoughts, but Thy law do I love " (Ps. cxix. 113), how much happier the lives of many would be ! In the knowledge of this, we may go on, with the Psalmist, to cry before God, " Look Thou upon me and be merciful unto me, as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy name " (cxix. 132).

VII

PROSPERITY'S PERILS

Deut. vi

Repetition ; but not without Reason.—There is in this chapter of Deuteronomy little fresh matter. But repetition, however brought about, is not always a mistake. It may be useful in forcing home the point it is sought to make. It is said that accused and guilty persons often break down under the continued repetition of one question. At first it is met by denial or evasion ; but still the question is put, until at last denial, evasion, and equivocation give out, and the true answer comes. Perhaps the continued insistence of Moses on the commands of God, the duty of obedience, the danger of transgression, and the certainty of divine punishment came home at last to minds unaffected by the first appeal.

When Prospered—" Beware."—But in this chapter there are also some details which invite separate consideration. There is the urgent warning (vers. 10-12) as to the perils of prosperity. When the promise was fulfilled, when they came into the good land, when they found themselves in occupation of territory and homes that once had been the property of others, when, in fact, everything would seem to go well with them—then was the time to beware.

—For Perils Abound.—They had come through many dangers ; but new perils were before them—perils not less serious than any the wilderness had provided. They might fall into the sin of the man in the parable, and prepare to take their ease, " eat, drink and be merry " (Luke xii. 19). Well did the wise man later write, " Feed me with food convenient for me : lest I be full

and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord ? " (Prov. xxx. 8, 9). It is a melancholy thought that with nations and with men prolonged peace and great prosperity bring in their train temptations which breed the worst vices known to civilisation. With some natures prosperity is no friend but the deadliest of foes, as Our Lord long ago made plain.

The Way of Escape.—How shall Israel, if willing, escape this danger and prevail over these temptations ? There is but one way for them. It has been put before them in the first delivery of the Commandments ; it is presented again. In pure and undivided allegiance to Jehovah, in an obedience which can only spring from such true devotion as " love " expresses, lies the promise of their security (vers. 4, 5, 17, 18).

—By Loving Obedience and Service.—It is a way of escape upon which Our Lord dwelt (Mark xii. 29, 30), when dealing with " one of the Scribes " whose hopes were bound up with the thought of legal obedience. Let it never be forgotten that under the old covenant obedience to the moral law did not stand alone ; it was joined, in its demand, to this sincere and heartfelt devotion to the One God. Again and again is this set down (see *e.g.* Deut. x. 12 ; xi. 1 ; xxx. 16, 20) as the one reliable motive for true service ; and, not less, as carrying with it by obedience the sure mercies of God, in the spirit of the Psalmist's appeal, " O love the Lord, all ye His saints : for the Lord preserveth the faithful " (Ps. xxxi. 23).

A Necessary Conjunction.—This alliance of love with service is not to be sundered. The problem presented by the lives of those who are sometimes called " the godless good " is in many respects a difficult one. It needs for its solution a careful consideration of what we mean by " good " ; it requires a larger and more intimate knowledge of men's hearts as well as of men's hands, of motive as well as of method, than any one of us can dare

to claim. Our own knowledge of what is " good " in an act or its issue must inevitably be partial and imperfect. But St. James most impressively warns us against the faith which " hath not works " and therefore is " dead " (ii. 17, 26) ; and if there be in life any " gift " which is " good " and " perfect "—in reality, and not merely according to man's judgement—we are sure that it must come " from the Father of lights " (Jas. i. 17). All this lends no countenance to the view that man may ignore the requirement that he shall love God and nevertheless succeed in keeping His commandments. The fulfilment of the one requires fulfilment also of the other. The " righteousness " of ver. 25 demanded obedience to " all these commandments," and not to the moral law only.

Loving God and Dependence on God's Love.—In truth the task of accurately obeying all the law in its spirit as well as its letter would inevitably throw the man of tender conscience back upon the love and mercy of God. And here we reach St. Paul's position. He saw men zealously endeavouring to get right with God by most careful observance, not only of the given law, but of its particular ritual and of the man-made traditions which had gathered around it. And this method tended to obscure men's view of God Himself, creating the impression that an observance, which if exacting might also become mechanical, satisfied divine requirement. The commandment to " love " was always in danger of falling out of sight, and what man had was not thought of as coming from God's mercy but as being acquired by merit. This position is broken down by the reminder that such complete and perfect keeping of the commandments was not in fact attained. No one could, in their spirit, keep all, and failure in one meant failure in the obedience asked for, or, as St. Paul puts it, " Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them " (Gal. iii. 10), or, as in

St. James ii. 10, " whosoever shall . . . offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

This Dependence Points to Jesus Christ.—We ourselves are not left to wrestle with the difficulty in the light given under Moses. The stream of revelation has broadened out. We are in the presence of the Incarnation and the Cross. What St. Paul wrote to the men of his time is still true for us. The law is still " our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ " that we may " be justified by faith " (Gal. iii. 24). For the word " schoolmaster " we shall, with greater accuracy, read " tutor "—the one who is charged, not so much with our head-learning, as with our moral supervision and personal guidance. In this sense the law is indeed our tutor, instructing and warning ; by its very presentation of what we ought to be confronting us with our failure ; by the conviction of our failure establishing our guilt ; and by our guilt throwing us back upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

—And His Work for Us.—For the Christian as for the Israelite perfect fulfilment of the law is unattainable. But the obedience beyond our reach is possible to another, and so " by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous " (Rom. v. 19), for God " hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him " (2 Cor. v. 21). Here in the " peace with God " thus attained, man has more than ever reason to " love " the Lord his God, and gains new strength to live a new life, a life that calls for care as great and thought as consistent as any demanded by the old law. Hear upon this a wise and honoured adviser :—

" Let your own soul be the object of your daily care and attendance. . . . Delight in its service and beg of God to adorn it with every grace and perfection. Nourish it with *good works*, give it peace in *solitude*, get it strength in *prayer*, make it wise with *reading*, enlighten it by *meditation*, make it tender with *love*, sweeten it with *humility*, humble it with

penitence, enliven it with *Psalms* and *Hymns*, and comfort it with frequent *reflections* upon future glory. Keep it in the *presence* of God." [1]

The Sin of Distrust—in Israel.—One more detail. "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted Him in Massah" (ver. 16). Ps. lxxviii. presents anew the story of Israel's "tempting" of God in the wilderness. There as here "tempt" does not convey the true meaning to us. The sin lay in doubting the power or the goodwill of God, in putting Him, so to speak, to the test. "Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" although they had seen Him give "water out of the rock." For their sin of distrust punishment fell upon them.

—And in Ourselves.—Shall the Christian men to whom God has given even greater privilege sin after this fashion? How often we need to remind ourselves of His watchful care! He can "furnish a table" for us in the wilderness of life's daily experience. Amongst all the thronging duties, the seemingly sordid tasks of everyday toil, amidst whatever hardships may await us, whatever sorrows may befall us, He can and will sustain such as trust Him. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that" Christ Jesus "shall give him shall never thirst" (John iv. 14); He was "the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever" (John vi. 51). Poor is the faith that would distrust such love and such provision; great is the peace of those who trust and by reason of their trust never are confounded.

[1] Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, chap. v.

VIII

A " PECULIAR PEOPLE "

Deut. vii

Israel's Privileged Position.—" Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God " (ver. 6); or, as it appears in Exod. xix. 5, 6, " Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people . . . and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." The nation is marked out as the particular—as we should say, the private—possession of Jehovah, a privilege enjoyed then by no other people. It was a position not attained by their own merit or endeavour; they were not in this respect self-made. They had not chosen Jehovah; but He had chosen them. In a sense they inherited their privileged status, for it came to them because the Lord " would keep the oath which He had " sworn unto their fathers (ver. 8), and, by reason of this tie, He had " set His love " upon them (ver. 7). Even His love is in a way an inherited privilege, for " the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them " (x. 15).

The Object of God's Love.—Israel as the object of God's love is a new way of viewing their position. It has not so far appeared in the Pentateuch, but is more fully developed in the Prophets. So in Hos. xi. 1, we have, " When Israel was a child, then I loved him "; in Isa. xliii. 4, " Since thou wast precious in My sight . . . I have loved thee "; and in Mal. i. 2, " I have loved you, saith the Lord." Privilege could go no further; and the privilege is witnessed to, as they are again and again reminded, by the favours showered upon them by their God. It lends force to the requirement that they in return should love their Benefactor.

Dangers Foreseen.—The peculiar position thus assigned to Israel must be kept clearly before us when we look at the very explicit directions given in this chapter (vers. 2, 16, 24) as to treatment of the peoples whom the Israelites were to supersede. To put the strangers down, even as conquerors, to dwell amongst or side by side with alien peoples, whose worship was idolatrous, whose moral code was entirely different, would have been to surround them with new and extreme perils. Before long they would have inter-married with pagans and been drawn into recognition of the same moral standards as their neighbours.

Restrictions Justified.—Nobody with any experience of life, and especially with any knowledge of the dangers which surround those living in non-Christian lands to-day, will fail to see the need for separation. The frailty of Israel had been too often disclosed for precautions on their behalf to be neglected. The subsequent history of the people, with their lapse into the use of heathen rites and acceptance of heathen superstitions, their worship of "other gods," of the host of heaven—these with the attendant moral corruption all remind us how sorely Israel needed to be set within a ring-fence. King Josiah's reformation, as recorded in 2 Kings xxiii., and the summary in Ps. cvi. 34-38, show us what came of overstepping the limits defined.

Another "Peculiar People."—But in this separation of Israel we have a foreshadowing of Christian conditions and duty. St. Paul bears witness that Our Lord "gave Himself for us, that He might . . . purify unto Himself a peculiar people" (Titus ii. 14); and St. Peter assures the widely scattered believers that they are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Pet. ii. 9). This "peculiar people," like the earlier, owes its position, not to its own merit or choice, but to the love of God (John iii. 16).

The Christian in the World.—This position of dignity

is also one of great responsibility, for the peculiar people are to be the salt of the earth, and as prominent as a city set on a hill. Their position is wonderfully presented by Our Lord Himself in His last great discourse (John xvii.). They are to be in the world, and He would not pray that they should be taken from it; that, indeed, would be to end at once their witness, service, and ministry. They are to be in the world, and yet not of it; passing through it as strangers and pilgrims; yet so bearing themselves that men, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father which is in heaven.

Separation from the World.—Within the Christian Church there have been and still are varying views as to what this separation from the world should mean. Some have found in it a call to the life of the ascetic and the hermit; others to that of a monk's cell or the seclusion of a nunnery; others to a participation in the ordinary employments of life but coupled with a very rigid abstinence from all that was deemed of the world worldly. But nevertheless some of the finest examples of Christian service have been and still are found amongst those who enter freely into social life.

St. Paul's Warning.—Perhaps there is warning against the disposition to judge one another in St. Paul's discussion in Romans xiv. The thing that may help us all is the Apostle's reminder there (ver. 12) that "every one of us shall give account of himself unto God." It is well that each should turn the light of enquiry and criticism upon himself, and "judge not" that he "be not judged." This is not to offer countenance to a low estimate of Christian responsibility or duty; it is only to act in the spirit of Our Lord's own warning.

Guiding Lines.—But here in this chapter are guiding lines. There is the avoidance of entangling alliances or intimate relations (vers. 2, 3). The history of Lot supplies a familiar warning, but one not a whit less evident or decisive than may at any time be seen in the world round

about us. No doubt it has always been so. St. Paul saw reason to warn against being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. vi. 14). In John Bunyan's time the patent danger accounts for his picture of Mr. Badman's unhappy first wife. And matrimony is not the only close tie which needs to be viewed with circumspection.

—*And their Warning.*—There is, in the second place, the avoidance of part or lot with idolatrous worship (ver. 5). It is the spirit of this warning into which we must enter. For it is much easier to wax indignant at some forms of worship we regard as wrong than to make sure that we ourselves have not set up idols in our hearts. It is a simpler matter to echo the Psalmist's derisory condemnation of idols than to enter with sincerity into the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. Perhaps we shall do well to watch less critically the lives of others and more straitly to examine ourselves. Then it may appear whether we are diligently exercising ourselves in faithful stewardship, in the right use of entrusted gifts, in works of lovingkindness and mercy, in lowliness of mind, and in readiness to make any sacrifice God may require.

And Remembrance of the Promises.—To such as would obey the command, it pleased Jehovah to make great promises. Material prosperity (ver. 13) was assured them and promised again in xxviii. 5, 8. The same assurances find place in the prophetic message, as in Mal. iii. 10, 11. The Psalmist (cvii. 38) sees the same reward bestowed on his people.

—*Old and New.*—There is a sense in which these promises are still accepted and fulfilled, inasmuch as a careful regard for the laws of God tends to such habits of life as make for prosperity. But under the new covenant we have promises of another order. The "unsearchable riches of Christ" bestowed upon us in redemption are of more consequence to the man who

remembers death and judgement. The riches of His grace in all the gifts which the Holy Spirit can bestow upon man adorn and beautify life and character beyond all the powers of earthly wealth. The prosperity of ver. 13 is, after all, a little thing compared with the exceeding great and precious promises made to us through Jesus Christ.

IX

REMEMBRANCE OF PAST MERCIES

Deut. viii

A Needed Reminder.—The old heading of this chapter in our English Bibles calls it "An Exhortation to obedience in regard of God's dealing with them." It is in fact an exhortation to remember past mercies and to remember as an incentive to obey. We may fairly assume that no one regards this exhortation as superfluous —at least after thought. After thought, indeed; for here and there one may come upon neighbour or acquaintance, who, in bitterness of spirit or foolish self-pity, will protest that whatever mercies there are have always gone in other directions. Their retrospect always seems to show them other people prospered where they were not, other people spared when they were afflicted, other people dowered with all sorts of advantages which are denied to them. Sometimes it needs very frank dealing to remove this perverted view of their own past, to bring out the fact that there was something in themselves which might fully account for their failure and their sorrows in comparison with the condition of others.

God's Way of Dealing.—Sometimes it needs the reminder that the purposes of God for each one of us may just as certainly require the incidence of disappointment or bodily affliction or worldly loss as the granting of their opposites. The devout soul has always felt the need of this reminder, though not in the same measure as the querulous folk of little or no faith. But these are well assured that all nevertheless is well:—

"When I sink down in gloom or fear,
Hope blighted or delayed,

Thy whisper, Lord, my heart shall cheer,
'Tis I: be not afraid!'" [1]

Did not the same Voice say "Lo, I am with you always"? And, if so:—

"O say not thou art left of God,
Because His tokens in the sky
Thou canst not read; this earth He trod
To teach that He was ever nigh.

"He sees, beneath the fig-tree green,
Nathanael con his sacred lore;
Shouldst thou thy chamber seek, unseen
He enters through the unopened door.

"And when thou liest, by slumber bound,
Outwearied in the Christian fight,
In glory, girt with Saints around,
He stands above thee through the night." [2]

The Training of Discipline.—Now in the story of the Egypt life and the desert travel, to which Moses here refers, there was no lack of sore discipline, of hard affliction, of repeated trial. But Moses for the time leads them rather to think of deliverance and of mercy (vii. 8; viii. 2, 15-16). We do well to follow his guidance. Is it not a common fact of pastoral experience that this guidance is followed by God's people? Is it not the people who have come through great tribulation, and the people who are never free from anxiety, and the people who are always enduring physical pain, who must often praise God for His goodness and most often recall His mercies? Is it not true that those who have led the most sheltered lives the least often return thanks; that those who have had little or no physical pain often prove the worst patients; that those who have enjoyed years of comfort and affluence the most keenly resent the trials of penury? In a way all this seems natural

[1] J. H. Newman in *Lyra Apostolica*, "Be not Afraid."
[2] *Ibid.*, "Tokens."

enough, for there has been no preparation for, no training in the way to meet, the new conditions. In place of resentment and complaint they might adopt for themselves some advice of Horace.[1] "*Appone lucro*," set aside as so much clear gain, not only whatever length of days may come but also every good thing of their past. To the young or the middle-aged this may not be easy; but the sooner the lesson is learned, the happier life becomes. As for their elders, these may well cry to God, with Wordsworth's Wanderer :—

> "Come, labour, when the worn-out frame requires
> Perpetual Sabbath—come, disease and want,
> And sad exclusion through decay of sense—
> But leave me unabated trust in Thee—
> And let Thy favour, to the end of life,
> Inspire me with ability to seek
> Repose and hope among eternal things—
> Father of heaven and earth!—and I am rich,
> And will possess my portion in content."[2]

A Wealth of Matter for Thanksgiving.—In truth the devout person can have no difficulty in finding ground for thanksgiving. The first and greatest is that which touches our highest interest, God's "inestimable love in the redemption of the world by Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . the means of Grace and the hope of Glory." We do well to be often found "giving thanks unto the Father" for the mercies St. Paul sets before the Colossians (i. 12-14), not forgetting the addition to be noticed elsewhere—the duty of giving thanks for "all things" (Eph. v. 20), but keeping the great summons to gratitude always before our eyes.

Mercies by the Way.—Israel was bidden to "remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee" (ver. 2). The retrospect would range over forty years—a longer

[1] *Odes*, I. x.
[2] *The Excursion*, Book IV.

period than the young can compass, a shorter period than many of their elders can survey. If memory is encouraged, how full the years seem of incidents! Most of them must of course be trivial in the eyes of other folk; for in truth they were our own concern, not matters for publicity, not even perhaps for talk between friends, but just things that happened to ourselves in the course of ordinary everyday life. Looking back at them now, some things that then seemed trivial are now seen to have had a large importance. We could not judge them, for we did not know their issues. Now we see more clearly, more fully, and find cause to thank God for what at the time seemed to call for no special thanksgiving.

And Lessons Taught.—Israel was bidden to note (ver. 3) that God had humbled them and inflicted hardship that they might learn reliance upon Him. The Psalms—so full as they are of personal experience and personal reflection on "the changes and chances of this mortal life"—have much to say of God, the very present help in time of trouble. If we have never learned the lesson it is time for us to see and acknowledge the hand of God in the things that humble and lead us into suffering. Search out by all means the immediate causes; trace every mistake or defect of our own that may furnish explanation of how and why this happened; but, if you are trusting God, see behind it all some purpose from Him, and that some purpose for your good. To see in it the hand of God is to take all sorrow out of the humbling or the hardship.

—In Provision Made.—God, it seems, humbled Israel but to help, suffered them to hunger only that He might feed them, fed them just that He might lead their thoughts from the food of common experience to the "angels' food" (Ps. lxxviii. 25). Of God's provident care for His children in their daily necessities they have ample proof. No two personal or family histories are quite alike in this, but each knows its own story. In their

experience of mercy they must have seen again and again "that man doth not live by bread only." And what strength they drew from the food, better than the "angels' food" that Israel ate, from feeding by faith upon "the living bread which came down from heaven," and finding a glorious hope in the promise "he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" (John vi. 51, 58)!

—*And all is of God's Mercy.*—And all this is for thanksgiving, and not for pride or self-satisfaction, not for assurance that we have garnered all this for ourselves by some merit of our own. When Israel began to say, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth," then trouble was nigh at hand. "Let not the foot of pride come against me" is a prayer we may all from time to time need to use, for odious as pride is in the ordinary aspects of life it is ten times more odious when it is the spiritual pride that vaunteth itself and, unlike Charity, *is* "puffed up." Wisely does the old Litany bid its users pray, "From pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy . . . Good Lord, deliver us."

X

SINS RECALLED

Deut. ix

Remembrance of Sin : Its Peril.—There is a way of recalling past sins which can only carry danger with it. For though the remembrance may begin with sorrow, the powers of evil may use remembrance to renew the old temptation and move to repetition of the old sin. Memory needs to be watched, lest it be put to misuse. One has sometimes listened to recitals of old and discarded sins which raised real anxiety in the hearer's mind. For the record of the old evil life seemed to be given with a certain relish that held no hint of shame, but something almost of pride. The intent, no doubt, was good, but the manner seemed to call for some new repentance and more caution against an insidious but real temptation.

—And its Advantages.—But Moses is not recalling the sins of Israel in this spirit. He uses the past, first, as warning, then as providing an impulse towards gratitude and obedience. He tries to make the people realise the true gravity of past offences : " ye have been rebellious against the Lord " (ver. 7) ; they are " a stiff-necked people " (ver. 6) ; they need not suppose that the good foreshadowed for them came from their own merit or righteousness (vers. 4-6). And, having made all this quite plain to them, he recalls some conspicuous examples of their misdeeds, with a reminder that they had narrowly escaped from the just anger of God (vers. 8, 14), and that they owed much to his own personal intercession on their behalf (vers. 18, 25).

The Sin in Horeb.—" They made a calf in Horeb, and

worshipped the molten image." A reckless impatience could not wait for "the end of forty days and forty nights" (ver. 11); "as for this Moses . . . we wot not what is become of him" (Exod. xxxii. 1). He had, as they then admitted, brought them "up out of the land of Egypt," but that was over and done with.

—*Impatience.*—There is a certain impatience towards God which often leads to sin as grievous as the making and worship of the molten calf. God's guiding mercies are, so to speak, in preparation; there is for the time no obvious leading. It is not that God is out of action, no longer concerned for them, never again going to help. Far from it; His directions are making ready; at the appointed time they will be known. But the impatient cannot last out the period of waiting; they must fly to other sources of help, forgetful of the past. The other sources compare as poorly with the guiding hand of God as the molten calf did with Jehovah's help granted through Moses.

A Time of Trial and Test.—Why recall the old sin? Because the old temptation would, in one form or another, return. That is why we do well to remember it ourselves. There may come days when God's direct and manifest guidance seems withdrawn; but all the time He may be preparing new mercies for us. There may be those who, in matters of faith, rely much upon the direction and support of human friend or teacher. In one way or another that support may be, for a time, withheld. For them the withdrawal of the old support is a trial, and provides a test of their faith. Is that faith really their own, or must they say, with the Prophet's young man, "Alas, master, for it was borrowed"? Now is the time to find out whether it was God to whom their allegiance was given or only to Moses; whether it was God's laws they wished to obey, or only the commands of their Moses. To put it in another way, the trial will show whether their faith can stand alone

or whether it must be propped and buttressed by human guidance.

Sins of Discontent and of Doubt.—There were memories of other sins than that at Horeb. There were Taberah and Massah and Kibroth-Hattaavah, with their memories of popular discontent, popular yearning after material comfort, and popular distrust of God's care for them. There was Kadesh-Barnea, with its memories of still further doubt. Why recall them? Only by way of warning. And no student of human nature will say that Moses, in going back on the past, was wrong. For if some minds will readily revive the story of past sin and gloat over it, others deem past errors of little moment and consign them to oblivion. The wise will avoid both mistakes. If they recall past hours of repining, grumbling and doubting with shame, they may also find in them much to encourage. In times of renewed trial, or in those hours when physical or mental stress leads to depression of spirit and loss of faith, it will help us to remember how this happened before and in time was rebuked.

Sinners and the Intercessor.—But recollection of these old offences is accompanied by a reminder from Moses of the part which he played in the times of their infidelity (vers. 18, 19, 25, 26). Again and again he had to be the intercessor. "The Lord hearkened" unto him. Whether there was much real gratitude in the heart of the people is uncertain; though the Psalmist (cvi. 23) shows us how well the intervention of Moses was realised. If the work of Moses had been forgotten, it could hardly have surprised us, for the intercession of a greater than Moses is by many forgotten also. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John ii. 1, 2); an Advocate "Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 34); an Advocate not always remembered or sought in time of need.

The Fact of Sin.—To the soul conscious of its own sinful nature, its own imperfect obedience, its own admitted sins of omission and commission, the thought of an Advocate with God is one of reassurance and comfort. But the work of Our Lord as Advocate dwindles in importance as the doctrine of sin is obscured. And to think of sin in the old-fashioned way, to talk of it as St. Paul does, or Augustine does, or John Bunyan does, has gone very much out of fashion. That is a pity, because, however much the facts may be disguised, and however charmingly vague the terms in which the facts are stated, the facts themselves will remain unaltered. A sensualist is not the less a sensualist because he drags in psychology to explain his lewdness. A Prodigal is not the less a Prodigal because he protests that he must "live his own life."

XI

RENEWAL

Deut. x

The Covenant Renewed.—When the original tables of the law were shattered (ix. 17) before the eyes of the people, the covenant between Jehovah and themselves was dissolved. When, after his intercession, Moses is ordered to " hew . . . two tables of stone like unto the first," to take them up into the mount, and to prepare an ark or chest of acacia wood for their keeping, the covenant is renewed. The laws are reinscribed ; the tables brought down from the mount and placed in the ark ; the covenant is restored. A page in Israel's history of wide significance is recorded in a few simple sentences.

Interpretations.—Christian commentators have always seen in the history of the two incidents a foreshadowing of God's work of grace towards man under the new covenant. Indeed there is scarcely an incident in Israel's history or a detail in its law which has not been spiritualised. Within limits there is Apostolic warrant for this method in treating the Old Testament ; nor, reverently conducted, can it do other than lead us into profitable reflection. The tendency of religious thought in our time is, no doubt, in other directions ; but each of us may follow his own choice in this matter. We shall do well to remember the Apostolic verdict on Old Testament history, as put in Rom. xv. 4 ; 1 Cor. x. 6.

The Law and the Ark.—Some invite us to see in the ark a figure of Our Lord Himself. To Him the law is committed, for He alone can fulfil the law for us. In a sense therefore the law loses its terrors ; for though man cannot fulfil it, the law is fulfilled by our substitute. But

the ordinary reader will perhaps see the same lesson in a rather different light. In the sin of Israel he marks the fall of man from grace, and recognises the just anger of an offended God. In the intercession of Moses on the sinners' behalf he discerns the greater intercession of the Mediator, Jesus Christ. In the redelivery of the law, after the repentance of the people, he traces the pardon of God and the renewal of the covenant. It is a foreshadowing of what happens to man. It holds the promise of comfort to many a soul. For some have forgotten their pledge with God, and turned to other allegiance. Is all lost? Is there no hope, no way of return, no one to plead for them, no pardon possible, no renewal, however sincere their repentance? On the contrary, there is an Intercessor, there is the promise of pardon, there can be renewal of the covenant.

Covenant and Loving Service.—With renewal of the covenant come new demands for obedience: "what doth the Lord thy God require of thee?" The requirements are all-embracing—to fear God and to love God; to walk in His ways, to serve Him, to keep His Commandments (vers. 12, 13). They may be summarised as a single demand for loving service.

—*With Fear of the Lord.*—For loving service will know and will not shrink from that "fear of the Lord" which is four times commended to us as "wisdom" or "the beginning of wisdom" (Job xxviii. 28; Ps. cxi. 10; Prov. i. 7; ix. 10). Its association with service appeared natural enough to the Psalmist when he wrote "serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Ps. ii. 11); and no less natural to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who calls for "grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. xii. 28). It is the kind of fear which marked the life of the Churches in Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria, and led to their increase (Acts ix. 31). It is in no sense a melancholy or depressing feature in the Christian life,

for it is joined not only with happiness (Prov. xxviii. 14) and multiplied blessings (Ps. cxii; Prov. xxii. 4), but also with worship (Ps. xxii. 23).

—*With Love of the Lord.*—And love must needs enter into this service, making it a most joyful offering willingly made. And indeed if it be, on Our Lord's testimony, the "first and great commandment" (Matt. xxii. 38), willing obedience should not be hard to render. It must be an undivided allegiance, for the love of God cannot be shared with a love of the world (1 John ii. 15). And its test is obedient service (1 John v. 3). As with fear, so with love; the writer seems never to tire of calling for this single-hearted personal devotion to Jehovah, Whose care of His people has been so manifest in the benefits showered upon them.

Love and its Growth.—It may have been with some in Israel as with some amongst ourselves that *love* of God seems by no means easy to attain. Indeed it is a state of mind and feeling which is rarely attained, so to speak, at a bound. Like much of ordinary affection between ourselves, it is most commonly a thing of growth. With us, as with Israel, it may be prompted and strengthened by thought upon the relation of God, and more particularly His love, to ourselves; in our case more especially in the love shown when the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

Two Aspects of Service.—This loving service has in Deuteronomy (as indeed elsewhere) two aspects. There is the direct God-ward aspect embodied in the keeping of His commandments and statutes (ver. 13), and the call for undivided affection which will "cleave" to Him (ver. 20) and refrain from resort to "other gods" and their worship (xi. 16, 17). But there is also a man-ward aspect, set out in detail. There are laws, as we shall see, that point to care for the welfare of the nation as a nation, for the safeguarding of social life, for the guidance of the individual. The service carried out on the lines of

these ordinances would be marked by a broad and vigorous humanity. Nowhere else in the Old Testament, says Dr. Driver, " do we breathe such an atmosphere of generous devotion to God, and of large-hearted benevolence towards men ; nowhere else are duties and motives set forth with greater depth and tenderness of feeling, or with more winning and persuasive eloquence ; and nowhere else is it shown with the same fulness of detail how high and noble principles may be applied so as to elevate and refine the entire life of the community." [1] The keeping, then, of these commandments was a worthy service.

To Loving Service add Praise.—With this loving service should be joined the praise of their God : " He is thy praise " (ver. 21), that is, the object of their praise. On every view of Israel's history up to this time praise would seem to be a just tribute to their God ; and the Hebrew Psalmists, looking back, are moved again and again to write of praise as due from men to God, and the offering thereof as a privilege in men's part. The union of praise with service is surely natural enough. In the face of duty, responsibility and constantly recurring tasks, we lift up our hearts—lift them up to the Lord—giving Him thanks, as it is meet and right to do.

—*A Willing Offering.*—We offer praise and worship in no reluctant or grudging spirit, but joyfully and freely; in no uncertain or doubtful spirit, but as those who gratefully remember their debt to God ; in no fear of isolation or singularity, but in the fellowship of all faithful souls. Nay more, in a still larger company we approach our God :—

" With angels and archangels and all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, ever more praising Thee and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts ; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord most high."

[1] *International Critical Commentary : Deuteronomy*, Introduction, p. xxv.

XII

EXPERIENCE AND ITS PLEA

Deut. xi

Experience—A Responsibility.—Observation, knowledge, experience—these bring responsibility with them. Of some amongst the children of Israel Moses speaks as those " which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord your God, His greatness, His mighty hand, and His stretched-out arm " (ver. 2). In a sense they must have known about them, but only as bits of the national or tribal or family history. By reason of such acquaintance as this implied there was responsibility upon them ; but it was a lesser responsibility than that which rested upon their elders, to whom it could be said, " your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which He did " (ver. 7). These had had experiences which should have been for them a religious and a moral education ; experiences overwhelming in their wonder and significance. In the sin of Horeb they had erred as Manasseh erred when he fell into idolatry ; but after Jehovah's discipline they, like Manasseh (2 Chron. xxxiii. 13), " knew that the Lord He was God," and their future lay in holding fast by this knowledge.

Its Link with the Future.—There was good reason why observation and reflection should bear fruit ; for, without the grateful obedience these would suggest, there would be no continued prosperity for them in the land of promise (vers. 8, 9). That land was not like Egypt, nor would the conditions of cultivation be the same (vers. 10, 11). For its fertility rainfall was needed. As they were faithful, so would the blessing of God come down in

" the rain . . . in his due season " (vers. 13, 14). If they turned aside to idolatry, the rain would be stayed and the crops fail (vers. 16, 17). How fully this was borne out their history has shown us.

The warning given touched indeed the truth that we all need to learn, and no class more clearly than those who live in and by the land. Israel, in enjoyment of a fruitful land after desert wanderings, might easily fall into the habit of supposing themselves to be safe in their tenure and their prosperity. They are reminded that prosperity will depend on conditions beyond their control. They could not command the seasons, or order convenient successions of sunshine and rain. Though drought lasted from year to year, so that it seemed they must " perish quickly from off the good land " (ver. 17), they could not of themselves cause even one little shower to fall. It was well, therefore, for them to see how completely they were in the hands of God. And in just the same way it is good for us to see it also.

—*Aids to Memory.*—Remembrance, and obedience born of remembrance, being then so important, how can it be strengthened and helped ? Ways are pointed out (vers. 18-20) ; ways that are worth noting. For many are disposed to belittle the use of means that may help some —if not all—to regular habits of reflection, of prayer, and of praise. They see the danger ; they understand that it is easy for the means to acquire a greater importance than the very purpose they are meant to serve. To the direction given in vi. 8, 9 and here in vers. 18, 20, the devout Jew offered an exact but literal obedience. He displayed on forehead and left arm his phylacteries—small cases containing scrolls of parchment, on which were written the words of Exod. xiii, 1-10, 11-16, and Deut. vi. 4-9, xi. 13-21. His house bore on the right-hand door-post the *Mezuzah*, a small metal case containing a piece of parchment inscribed with Deut. vi. 4-9 and xi. 13-21. If literal obedience was from the first required

—and there were ancient Egyptian customs which would have made this not unnatural to a Hebrew—the outward signs were to be no more than aids to memory, means, so to speak, of grace.

Aids Misused.—By the time of Our Lord these aids to memory had become, in part and for some, matters of personal display, ostentatious professions of obedience made " to be seen of men " (Matt. xxiii. 5), particularly conspicuous in the case of a class whom He denounced as " serpents . . . generation of vipers." The outward memorials reminded these wearers not of God's mercy but of their own righteousness. The obedience to Jehovah they should have promoted had turned into a meticulous performance of the things required by human tradition. The weightier matters, the plain duties to God and man, set out in the law, were ignored or perverted. And so the old aids to memory and obedience had become witnesses against their users. In like manner every help to reflection, to prayer, to habits of worship may lose its value and become a snare ; may cease to be a means and come to be regarded as a thing of primary importance in itself. In so far as it does, it becomes a witness against the user.

The Appeal for Decision.—But Moses would have the people see that in calling for remembrance he was but asking for decision. He set before them " a blessing and a curse " (ver. 26). Later on (xxx. 15, 19) he repeats the appeal in yet more pathetic terms. On both occasions he speaks with absolute decision. There are two sides, the side of obedience and the side of disobedience ; the people must range themselves with one or the other. No middle position is allowed for. Neutrality is never contemplated. There is no place for the person who would defer decision until a more convenient season ; no room for the man who would admit the general advantages of obedience, and yet argue that there might be occasions when its demands should be relaxed. Choice, definite

choice, made with conviction, is asked for; choice as definite as that which Elijah set before the people (1 Kings xviii. 21); choice as definite as that which Our Lord defined as a necessity for right service (Matt. vi. 24); choice as distinct as that required in the solemn warning, "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth" (Luke xi. 23).

A Personal Appeal.—And here we may do well to note the manner of this appeal. It is made by a great leader, and is made with obvious feeling and with strong conviction. Could any hearer have said, "He doesn't really mean it"? Could any have put it aside on the ground that Moses was speaking in a purely official capacity, in a quasi-professional way? Could any have gone away with the impression that Moses was saying what he thought appropriate to the occasion, and not because he cared much about their deciding for one side or the other? On the contrary, the whole message of Moses is instinct with feeling—with feeling for the honour of his God, with concern for the welfare of his people. He is as anxious for their welfare as though each were his own child. He is passionately eager for their obedience, though mindful enough of their past.

An Example for Imitation.—Here surely is an example for those who speak to the people for God. The manner of the pulpit may well be differentiated from that of the platform. Airs and graces that might be pardonable in one would be offensive in the other. The responsibility of the office, the greatness of the interests involved, suggest a corresponding gravity and restraint. But this does not mean that earnestness, real concern, even affectionate concern, for others should not show themselves. How can they be avoided if, in the speaker, there be real conviction, true concern for the souls of others, righteous zeal for the cause of God? There will be no smooth conventionality, no nice avoidance of discomforting topics, no shrinking from condemnation

of sin, if these be there. They will both reprove, rebuke, and exhort; they will be ready to warn as well as to comfort (1 Thess. v. 14), and all in the manner of those to whom is given, not "the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. i. 7).

XIII

GUIDANCE OFFERED

Deut. xii. 1–28

The Laws and the Law-giver.—We reach now another section of Deuteronomy. Here are specific directions affecting the life of the community and the individual. They are directions given with authority; they are "statutes and judgements" (ver. 1) which have the power and majesty of Jehovah behind them. It is not an external or alien authority; it is that of the "Lord God of thy fathers" (ver. 1). And the application to the religious and personal life of the people is joined once more with reminder of His goodness.

Definite Guidance.—The injunctions which follow are very definite and very detailed. The circumstances of the people make this natural. They had much to learn; they had new and very serious problems to solve; they needed guidance—paternal, decisive, and clothed with full authority. Such stringency of law as it touches the religious life, and as it touches social and moral considerations, is in sharp contrast to many modern tendencies.

—*Rejected.*—There can be seen to-day a certain resentment against definiteness in belief, against regulation and order in habits of the religious life. Freedom is exalted—freedom of thought, of judgement, of habit. Much of this demand is, no doubt, vague and even inarticulate; but it makes against a definite acceptance of a personal Lord and Saviour and of open allegiance with a Church. The same exaltation of freedom enters into social and moral life, disclosing itself amongst the young sometimes in contempt for parental authority

and in a light-hearted indifference to parts of the moral law.

—*To the Loss of the Individual.*—What profit is there in this? What is gained by the refusal of settled convictions and established habits? Is there any proof that it helps the mind to reach out to God and the more readily to draw near to Him? In social life is it any help to discharging the duty of man to his neighbour, to meeting fairly the obligations of citizenship? In the home is it a help to establishing the right relations of husband and wife, of father and mother, of parent and child? In the personal life does it offer strength and guidance for the struggles with the temptations of the flesh, the faults of temper, and all the varied weaknesses of character that so often imperil the happiness of the home and the individual? What evidence is there that this freedom is a help? That it entails loss is beyond dispute. There are advantages in admission of authority, in obedience to law, in the establishment of sound habits.

The Law of the One Sanctuary.—In the exposition of the laws for Israel we come first upon directions which may appear to have little bearing upon modern life. First there is a law as to the one Sanctuary at which public worship shall be paid to Jehovah. The scenes of idolatrous worship amongst the Canaanites must be destroyed (vers. 2, 3). Such worship had its roots deep in the minds of many peoples besides the Canaanites; in some of its aspects it had a strong appeal to the lower side of man's nature. The obliteration of all that witnessed the old rites and customs was a safeguard to Israel. In the place of the gods many, they had but One God; in the place of the varied sites at which these gods were worshipped there should be for the worshippers of Jehovah but one place which He would choose "to put His name there" (ver. 5). How grave was the danger of infection from the pagan rites of vers. 2 and 3 is plain enough from the words of the

prophets. Hosea (iv. 13) found these rites, with their licentious features, rampant in his day. Isaiah denounced them (i. 29; lvii. 5), as did Jeremiah (ii. 20; iii. 13). The new law was broken; the old rites crept back into favour; the moral as well as the religious decay of the people followed in their train. The warning was justified.

The Three-fold Call.—The law of the one sanctuary seems, indeed, to have no primary bearing on modern life; but it has for us its suggestions and its plea. There is here a *call to worship*; to definite, explicit worship of the One God; to an ordered or regular worship in contrast with the old ways of the desert life, when "every man [did] whatsoever is right in his own eyes" (ver. 8). There is a *call to sacrifice*—"thither shall ye bring all that I command you" (ver. 11), worship carrying with it pledges of sincerity, tokens of gratitude, in themselves not only acknowledgments of God as the giver but also thankofferings for mercies received. There is a *call to rejoice* (ver. 12), in no selfish spirit but (ver. 12) as families and households, all combining in glad worship of their God. It is a summons repeated, with a particular reference, in xvi. 11, requiring a united response from old and young, from the head of the family and from his servitors.

The Plea of the Three-fold Call.—This three-fold call is a plea for regular, systematic worship of God in the Church and in the home. It reproaches the slackness of attendance at the public worship of God, the tendency to stand aloof from the life and organisations of a church, the growing disregard of prayer in the family. Whence come this slackness, this tendency, this disregard? In a sense from yielding to the temptations against which the law, as proclaimed by Moses, sought to protect Israel. As they forgot Jehovah and slipped away into fellowship with the followers of false gods, so men and women lose contact with convictions as to God the

Father, as to the Cross of Christ, as to judgement to come. In the place of these they yield allegiance to lower calls, heard in the world round about them, and offering attractions after their kind. Happier is the man who can say with the Psalmist, " Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments ; for therein do I delight " (Ps. cxix. 35).

XIV

THE WAY OF OBEDIENCE

Deut. xiii.–xiv. 21

Dangers Ahead.—" Have no fellowship," says St. Paul, " with the unfruitful works of darkness " (Eph. v. 11). That is the spirit of the injunctions Moses has been delivering. But he knows the dangers that may come from false teachers, claiming authority, showing signs, and using such means as personal or social ties may provide. Here is warning against them. They are not to be followed, though they claim that God has spoken to them in visions or dreams (vers. 1-5). That God might use such means is not denied ; but the dreamer shall be judged by his dream and his message. If he bids the people " go after other gods " (ver. 2), then that prophet or dreamer has no commission from Jehovah ; he must be punished accordingly (ver. 5). He has earned his penalty ; for he has tried to pervert others. In the circumstances of the people he was a peril to the nation as well as to his immediate hearers. He broke the law with clear intent, and, breaking it, knew the penalty that awaited him.

In this a man's foes might be they of his own household. But though the tempter were bound by the closest ties of blood or friendship, the duty was the same, the sin identical, the punishment equally to follow (vers. 6-11). The danger of yielding was in such a case the greater ; the warning therefore the more needed. Even if a whole city listened to evil counsellors, fell away into idolatry, and became a community of idolaters, the same decisive action must be taken against them (vers. 12-18). There springs to memory at once the command of Elijah after

the great test on Mount Carmel: "Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape" (1 Kings xviii. 40); and the verdict delivered to Jeremiah in the matter of prophets who claimed to utter a divine message they had not received (Jer. xiv. 15).

Severity Justified.—All this is accounted strange by some to-day. They overlook the character of the paganism against which it was sought to protect Israel. The Psalmist (cvi. 37, 38) recalls some of the horrors that passed muster as acts of piety with those who fell away:—"They sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood." There were obscene and licentious rites and customs also, witness the record in Numbers xxv. The whole system tended to national as well as personal corruption and decay. For whilst on the one hand it presented the gods as craving for blood and delighting in cruelty, on the other it gave a free rein to lust and licence.

The Modern Peril.—The modern mind is largely indisposed to look at the religious or moral aspects of the problem. It rather leans towards leniency in respect of any and every kind of teaching. There is a new "liberty of prophesying"; and few communities profit by it. We may feel that we can do but little to influence the general course of public life, and yet no citizen is quite powerless. We can discountenance laxity when it comes our way.

—And the Christian Duty.—It is no part of a Christian's duty to sit silent and unmoved when faith is derided; or to encourage teaching which subverts the moral law. There is in all civilised society a central body of people who neither actively side with the vicious nor openly oppose them. But even these expect that others who stand for the Christian faith and Christian morals will

take another line. Although they bear no part in denouncing evil themselves, they condemn professors of religion who are equally silent. Every Christian community and every member of Christ stands pledged to the fight against moral disorder, whatever sanction it may claim for itself. It is the shame of the Christian Church that it spends so much of its means and its energies on minor controversies of faith, of Church organisation and government, of the details of worship, of rites and ceremonies, whilst finding it so hard to unite in resistance of moral evil. But at least each one of us should be doing our part, in no spirit of self-righteousness, but as much as possible in the manner recommended by St. Paul to Timothy (2 Tim. ii. 19-26).

The Appeal of Custom—It seems strange to pass from a great principle of conduct to details touching the outward expression of grief; but there is a connection. False teachers have their peril; so have pagan customs. The followers of Jehovah are to worship Him where directed, and are zealously to punish the worship of strange gods. In this will clearly be shown their separation from the heathen around them (xiv. 2). Being thus distinct, they are to guard against being drawn into following heathen rites and customs. If the pagans showed grief by wounding or scratching themselves until the blood flowed, or by shaving their hair, the Israelites were not to do the like (xiv. 1). The custom was very widely spread amongst the Semitic peoples; Israel was to avoid it.

Restrictions for "an holy people."—The prohibitions in regard to food (xiv. 3-21) are founded on the same principle. The laws are for "an holy people" (ver. 21). The precise ground of the prohibition in the case of each bird, beast, fish, and creeping thing is not easily determined. Possibly, could we transport ourselves to the place and the time of these prohibitions, the reason might in every case declare itself. If we have ourselves

passed into a larger liberty, we may still be sure that behind these early restrictions lay good and sufficient causes. The injunction against seething a kid in its mother's milk (ver. 21) had such a cause. It witnessed to a heathen superstition. For there was a belief that milk which had been thus used was a potent charm for ensuring good results from field or orchard. This additional prohibition, dropped in, as it were, unexpectedly, and without obvious relation to its context, is, after all, a natural part of the warning against practices of the people round about, an additional reminder of their duty to the One God Who, if they obeyed His voice, would shower upon them the blessings of fertility, prosperity, and power (xxviii. 1-14). These particular directions did but reflect care for the well-being of a chosen people They were, like the Thessalonians of a later date—and ourselves—to " abstain from every form of evil " (1 Thess. v. 22, R.V.).

XV

THE LAW OF THE TITHE

Deut. xiv. 22–29

In a Commentary designed to aid only in the devotional study of the Book it is unnecessary to discuss the relation of the tithe here enjoined with that of Num. xviii. 21. Let us rather see how this regulation may offer guidance as to Christian duty.

Tithe and its Use.—Tithe, or a tenth of the produce of the soil, together with the " firstlings " of the herds and flocks, was directed to be taken each year (ver. 22), carried to the appointed place, and there eaten " before the Lord thy God " (ver. 23). If the appointed sanctuary were too far off for the tithe to be carried thither, the order was to " turn it into money," and, money in hand, to " go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose," and with the money to provide a feast for the family and household (vers. 24-26). To this family gathering the Levite was to be invited, because he had " no part nor inheritance " with them. In the third year the tithe was to be laid up " within thy gates," in some storehouse within the town (ver. 28). There, and not at the central sanctuary, all this provision should make a feast for the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow—a generous repast or succession of meals at which they should " eat and be satisfied " (ver. 29).

The Example for us.—What is there here for a later age? In it at least is the suggestion that a definite proportion of one's income should be set aside for purposes associated with our religious life. But, it may be said, the yearly tithe—save in the exceptional year named—was to be spent on a family banquet at which

the Levite would be, so to speak, the only outsider. This is no parallel to the weekly contribution asked by St. Paul from the Corinthians (1 Cor. xvi. 2), for that was a collection on behalf of others, and this is the setting apart of a tithe to be spent on the family itself. Such a gathering would, however, be an acknowledging of mercies received in the fruits of the soil and the increase of flocks and herds. It would serve to keep alive in the minds of young and old the sense of dependence on God. Moreover, as the portionless Levite was called to the feast, it associated the family with instituted religion, and with a recollection of duty towards those dedicated to its service.

Is there not also a remembrance of one side of family life which is known to us all, but is here lifted into the region of religious practice? The tithe is to provide the material for a family party. It is to be strictly domestic, but very distinctly also of the festival type. The old injunction seems here to smile upon the occasions when parents gather their children, and it may be grandchildren also, around them. It encourages those who would rather see the family finding happiness within the home circle than be for ever seeking it outside. It recognises the true place of such simple pleasures. The tendency of modern habit is all against the strengthening of family life, and all in favour of a search for pleasure outside the home. We do well to take such a view of home life as shall make the home not a place from which old and young escape in search of happiness elsewhere, but a place which holds old and young together.

"*The Tithe of the Poor.*"—The third year tithe is to be viewed in a different way. The landless Levite, "the stranger and the fatherless and the widow which are within thy gates" (ver. 29) are to enjoy the tithe of the increase in that one year. They gathered for this, not at the central sanctuary, but "within thy gates," in the several cities in which they dwelt. In after times this

was called by Jews " the tithe of the poor " ; it was an officially directed provision for their help, a kind of poor-rate, available only at long intervals, irregular in its amount, but fixed in its proportion to the prosperity of the tithe-payer.

Poor Rates and the Payment.—The modern poor-rate has fallen from the high estate of this early tithe. It is strictly demanded from us—the amount stated and duly authorised by human authority. The demand is often associated with those for meeting the cost of sewers, of lighting, of education, and of other things belonging to the life and comfort of the community. The heart of the payer often rejoices in proportion to the smallness of the demand. Perhaps it is a pity that the thought of help for the poor and needy should be thus joined with things that seem to have no obvious relation to it. And yet there is a relation. For some of the things on which the money is spent are organised for comfort and health of the community. In regard to these the community is just taking care of itself. That is true even of what it provides for education.

How Viewed.—But what is taken for the poor must be viewed as the community's " tithe of the poor." What if some regard it rather as an insurance against larger evils, and pay it much as they might pay a fire premium ? Let us lift it out of this company and see rather in it the community's endeavour to do its duty by poor and needy. The payment can never be voluntary, for it is demanded and enforced ; but at least it can be made in the spirit of a willing offering and not of a resented impost.

It is the misfortune of all work undertaken by government or municipality for the relief or the betterment of others that it must be financed by enforced payments. But adequate relief of widespread needs calls for adequate organisation. The community can in this way tender help efficiently where individual endeavour alone might be partial in operation and possibly misdirected.

XVI

DEBTORS ALL

Deut. xv

The Law of Release.—Theocracy, government by God, has some characteristics that find no parallel in the modern state. Here is one of them. The law as to the " release " of debtors has now no place in the laws of communities or nations. There was a kind of parallel in the cancelling of debts, sometimes under grave necessity, adopted in ancient Athens ; but here the provision is for a regular " release " at the stated period.

Was it Total Remission ?—What was the nature of this release ? Did it require that the loan should be remitted, just as though it had been repaid ? In that case there was a strong probability, as ver. 9 shows, that borrowers would find it hard to get help as the year of release approached. But the denial of assistance is rebuked, and the necessary loan definitely enjoined (ver. 8). The terms of this injunction point not to loans asked for on business terms or for business purposes, but to loans needed to meet the dire necessities of " thy poor brother." The whole transaction is one of brotherly love and compassion, not one of commercial dealings. Later on commercial dealings no doubt came under this rule, and, as a result, the Jews devised methods by which the letter of the law might be kept whilst its spirit was evaded. These later practices sufficiently indicate the meaning which the people most concerned placed upon this law.

—Or Suspension of Payment.—On the other hand the obvious difficulty of exhorting people to lend, in kind or in money, that which might in a year or two have to be turned into a free gift, has led to another interpretation.

Under this it is supposed that the " release " was not a forgiving of the debt, but was only the refraining for the seventh year from any demand for repayment. Such a " release " would doubtless be of advantage, but only of temporary advantage. It put off, so to speak, the evil day, but it did not give permanent relief.

The " Release " Actual.—Despite the difficulty associated with the lending of money under conditions which made repayment so uncertain, it is safer to accept the old and Jewish interpretation of " release " than that which some modern scholars have assigned to it. And this is the more reasonable when we note that a borrower could, if willing, repay a loan during the year of " release." The lender was to " let drop " his claim, but the borrower was not forbidden to make payment.

The Root Principle.—The whole system, such as it was, had its origin in a conception of true brotherhood within the nation. If any suffered from misfortune, it was the duty of others to help them. Repayment of such help was secondary ; succour of the needy was the first thing to be thought of. The method of help adopted was no doubt chosen in relation to the times and conditions ; the practice may not in later years have been generally observed ; and those who felt bound by the law, but did not wish to keep it, found means of evasion.

One Lesson : Brotherly Love.—In all this what is there for us ? Surely, whichever interpretation we adopt, there is a reminder of that tenderness towards the needs of others which is so manifestly a proper part of the Christian character. " Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ? " (1 John iii. 17). St. James looks at the matter from another side (Jas. ii. 15, 16) ; but each is equally conscious of the duty laid upon the Christian, and of the scandal involved when that duty is neglected.

—*Often Enforced.*—How, indeed, can a Christian man

who is sincere neglect this duty? Can he forget his Master's warning against the laying up of "treasures upon earth" in neglect of "treasures in heaven" (Matt. vi. 19, 20)? Or St. Paul's reminder touching the man who "soweth sparingly" and "shall reap also sparingly" (2 Cor. ix. 6)? Or his exhortation to special regard for "them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. vi. 10)? Or St. John's almost passionate indictment of the man who "shutteth up his bowels of compassion" from the brother whom he sees to be in need (1 John iii. 17)? Let us thank God that faith, all over our Christian world, does bear fruit in the right fashion.

Another Lesson: Debtors All.—But surely this "release" has another message for each one of us. We use the prayer Our Lord taught us: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. vi. 12). More commonly we say "forgive us our trespasses," for in a very real sense our trespasses are our debts. We owe full obedience, and stray into disobedience; we owe single-minded service to our Master, and fall into service of self, as though we were debtors to "live after the flesh" (Rom. viii. 12). When we have loyally striven and have done our best, still "we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke xvii. 10).

—*In Need of Mercy.*—Is not this sense of indebtedness very real to every sensitive mind? There is, no doubt, to be heard here and there a self-depreciation which smacks of unreality, and borders very closely on self-praise. It is as bad as the self-confidence of the Pharisee, and may lull the soul into false security. But the real thing—the true sense of unworthiness, of failure, and so of indebtedness—is surely never far from the thoughts of every sincere and devout Christian. How can it be otherwise? If for our best endeavours all the real motives are searched out; if for every good intention the imperfect fulfilment is noted; if in all honesty the worst as well as the best of our lives is taken count of,

how can we fail to see ourselves as other than debtors, who owe " ten thousand talents " and have not wherewith to pay ? But, happily for the penitent soul, every year is a year of release ; every one may feel and know that his Lord has had compassion and forgiven the debt (Luke vii. 41, 42).

The Slave's Release.—There is another " release " also to be made. The law as to slaves (vers. 12-18) is as merciful as the law of debts. In the seventh year of service the Hebrew slave, man or woman, was to receive the offer of release. The slave was not compelled to go ; if (vers. 16, 17) attached to his master and happy in his service, he might elect to remain. Then a significant act, the piercing of the ear, marked him as a slave for good. The freed was not sent empty away (vers. 13, 14), but was furnished " liberally " with provision for his journey, back to old friends or in search of new.

Thus for the Hebrews there was mitigated one sorrow of the pagan world. Their people had felt to the full its hardships in Egypt ; so far as they were acquainted with the outside world they would know that slavery, often in its worst forms, existed everywhere.

A Law Neglected.—It is a melancholy reflection that, when Christianity at last began to see that slavery was a blot on the character of a Christian nation, its continuance was defended by appeal to Holy Scripture. So definite did its warrant appear that men otherwise of eminent piety defended it with zeal. But I cannot find record that they insisted on observance of the law as to release.

The Christian Bond-Servant.—Let us turn from remembrance of others' fault, to think here of our own position as slaves, " bond-servants " of Jesus Christ. It is a word much used, surely in full consciousness of its import, by St. Paul and other apostles. Paul (Rom. i. 1 ; Gal. i. 10 ; Phil. i. 1 ; Titus i. 1), James (i. 1), Peter (2 Pet. i. 1), and Jude (ver. 1) all glory in this bondage and service. They desired no release, but in

their Master's service would cheerfully have shown the pierced ear—the sign of servitude which to some was a symbol of shame. So must all true servants view themselves; rejoicing to serve, asking for no better life, seeking for no change; only just wishing to know the Master's will and seeking for help to do it; not minding the reproach cast upon the bond-servant, not finding the workday too long, nor ever seeking other wage than He shall give.

XVII

THE THREE PILGRIMAGES

Deut. xvi. 1–17

The Pilgrimages.—Here is a reminder of the narrowness of the land occupied by Israel, and the smallness of their numbers. For the command is " three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose " (ver. 16). The injunction lays stress upon the unity of the people, the simplicity of their organisation, the national character of their faith and of religious observance. One feature marks them all—each is an acknowledgment of the mercies of God.

Their Messages.—The Passover is the memorial of one great outstanding mercy, the deliverance from Egypt (vers. 1, 3, 6, 12); The Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles are memorials of God's continued mercies in the fruits of the earth. Thus one speaks of national deliverance and the others of national sustenance. One recalls a great event not to be repeated and yet never to be forgotten; the others speak of recurring and repeated mercies. One linked the thought of Jehovah with a past action in which the power of their God was shown by supernatural intervention; the others bade them think of Him as the ever-present helper, upon whose bounty they lived. They are not the only sacred seasons to be observed by the people; these and others are more detailed in Lev. xxiii. and in Num. xxviii., xxix. The three great Feasts or Pilgrimages stand here alone.

On Keeping Holy Days.—Augustine (*De Civit. Dei*) summarises the purpose of all such festivals when he says that " by festival solemnities and set days we dedicate and sanctify the memory of His [God's] benefits lest

unthankful forgetfulness should as time passes creep upon us." But there was another danger, in part at least, marked off from "unthankful forgetfulness." The festival times were remembered; the external duties were performed; but the observance became mechanical, devoid of true feeling. The memory of God's great mercies in the past became no more than the admission of some events in a distant past which no longer moved men to true worship.

—*In the Wrong Way*.—By Isaiah's time the pilgrimages had for many lost their true character. Men came to them still, but they were not such worshippers as Jehovah sought. The scathing denunciation in Isa. i. 11-15 shows us that the making of the journey, the presentation of appointed offerings were in themselves of no value; it was the heart and the life of the pilgrim that mattered. And there the people were at fault. But the prophet's denunciation is not a denunciation of the law which ordered the festivals, nor a denial of their claim upon the respect of the people. It is a denunciation of the way in which the old duties were performed, of the gross hypocrisy, which made pilgrimages and presented offerings, and yet neglected the simple duties of obedience to God.

—*So with the Lord's Day*.—We can see on all sides the same peril in popular attitude towards the Lord's Day. Outwardly amongst ourselves—though with an ever-increasing laxity—it is kept as a day set apart. There is abstinence—though not universal—from the usual habits of employment. It is not quite as other days; indeed with many it still holds its sacred character and receives its grateful observance. But whilst on all sides there is the outward recognition which marks off Sunday from other days in the week, the right use of the day is so far from being general as to be, in many quarters, exceptional. The cause does not lie in any claim for Christian liberty, and freedom to observe or not to observe just as man's

intellectual faculty, guided by the Spirit, might direct. It is found rather in denial of or indifference to any claim for other use of the day than inclination may prompt.

St. Paul's Language.—From those who are indifferent to the claims of religion we may expect no other view of Sunday than that it is, for most, a day upon which any employment or way of passing the time differing from that of the usual occupation may be indulged in. But in other quarters a very similar view is put forward on definitely Christian and Scriptural grounds. It is urged that St. Paul is against all requirement of observing one day above another. The argument is based on Gal. iv. 10, 11, and Col. ii. 16, 17. It is held (*e.g.* by Sanday and Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 387) that " such observances if undertaken in a scrupulous spirit are opposed to the very essence of Christian freedom." And again, " The Christian who has grasped the freedom of the Gospel recognises the indifference in themselves of all such ordinances." Here no distinction is admitted between the observance of the Lord's Day, which in principle looks back to the Fourth Commandment, and the observance of festivals of ecclesiastical ordinance, such as Christmas Day. There is such a distinction, although Liddon (*Explanatory Analysis of the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 260) appears to class " Revelation " and " Church Authority " together as equally binding on the Christian man.

The Witness of Experience.—May we not turn from all discussion of obligation to add the witness of Christian experience? Does not the worthy observation of the Lord's Day carry its own reward with it? Is it not found to be a time not only of rest and refreshment to mind and body? Does it not also provide for many the happy season when they cut themselves loose from the cares and problems of daily life, and live for a while in clearer air? Does it not provide that opportunity for thought upon our relation to God which is so sparingly

provided amidst the ever-increasing hurry and pressure of the working days' life? The seventeenth-century Doctor-Poet, Henry Vaughan, wrote of Sunday as "heaven once a week." The world at large has ceased to take it so. But the true disciple at least has no doubt as to the value of his Master's invitation, "Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest a while," though it be where many are "coming and going," and not in a desert place (Mark vi. 31). We shall, with George Herbert, feel assured of blessing:—

"The Sundays of man's life,
Threaded together on Time's string,
Make bracelets to adorn the Wife
Of the eternal glorious King:
On Sunday Heaven's gate stands ope;
Blessings are plentiful and rife,
More plentiful than hope."

XVIII

FENCING THE FAITH

Deut. xvi. 21–xvii. 7

A Command Transgressed.—The sternness of the Mosaic law faces us again and again. The textual critics have their own way of explaining why we are faced by some repetitions, and why some ordinances appear in what seem, to the general reader, unexpected places. But for our immediate purpose we need not rebel against repeated reminders that God requires undivided allegiance. Here (in xvi. 21, 22) is a command which may be set beside the injunction in Exod. xxxiv. 13, "Ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves." That the warning was not superfluous is plain enough from the prophet's message in 1 Kings xiv. 15, "They have made their groves, provoking the Lord to anger"; from the record of Ahab's sin in 1 Kings xvi. 33; from Jeremiah's lament over the "sin of Judah" (xvii. 2); and from the references of Isaiah and Micah.

For the better understanding of vers. 21 and 22 we must follow the R.V. "Thou shalt not plant thee an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee. Neither shalt thou set thee up a pillar which the Lord thy God hateth." The command follows the injunction already given (vii. 5; xii. 3) to destroy the Asherahs and pillars found amongst the Canaanites. The injunction is directed, as before, to protecting the people in their religious life from the temptation to fall in with pagan forms of worship common amongst the Canaanites.

—*As to "Groves."*—But what were the "groves," or,

better, the "Asherah"? And what was meant by the "image," or, better, the "pillar" or obelisk? The Asherah may have been an actual tree, for sacred trees were held in reverence by some of the Semites. Or it may have been a pole, which could be planted in the ground, or cut down, broken in pieces, burned in the fire. The poles may have been no more than a relic of tree-worship, or they may have represented a goddess, Asherah. For practical purposes it matters little which view is taken. In any case the Asherah belonged to heathendom, and was not to be associated in any way with the worship of Jehovah. Their destruction has been paralleled in the burning of idols in other places at later times.

—*And Pillars.*—The pillar ("image") or obelisk had similar associations and is equally condemned. It may have been a piece of rock, found erect; it may have been an obelisk fashioned by hand of man. Such pillars were linked with heathen forms of worship. Under Rehoboam, for example, they were associated with the "high places" and Asherim (1 Kings xiv. 23). Jehu's men found them in the "house of Baal" (2 Kings x. 26).

The Warning Transferred.—The warning for ourselves seems plain enough. Man is a social animal. He is always affected by his surroundings. To resist the evil round about is for most people no easy matter. A young man, a young girl, reared in a home atmosphere of Christian faith and morals, faces new dangers if transported to the life of some continental cities—or even to some spheres of work in our own cities. A business man, moved from occupation at home to a business in, let us say, Calcutta, or Shanghai, or Tokio, or Buenos Aires, or the West Coast of Africa, is faced with old temptations in new forms. These are the more extreme cases. There are others, less conspicuous but just as real. People move from one place to another; possibly from association with Church life to new surroundings

amidst new social conditions. The old ties are broken ; they may be displaced by others far different in character. The Asherim and the pillars find, perhaps, some modern representatives in the religious or the social life of the new sphere. There is knowledge of our weakness in the old Collect which asks that " among all the changes and chances of this mortal life we may ever be defended " by God's gracious and ready help.

The Wrong and the Right Offerings.—From this warning against the snares of new surroundings we pass to an injunction which may have been suggested by the conditions of idolatrous worship. It may have been that the sacrifices offered to false gods were not always of the best. It must not be so in the worship of Jehovah. The offering made to Him must be without blemish (Lev. xxii. 20). And here again we see that the warning was only too sadly justified by later events. Malachi found people offering the blind, the lame, the sick, and " that which was torn " (i. 8, 13, 14). From such offence the Christian, no less than the Hebrew of old, has to be preserved. He may not offer equivalents of the blind, the lame, the sick, and " that which was torn "—not an unintelligent and careless faith, nor a halting and uncertain obedience, nor a service maimed and disfigured. He may not proffer as his sacrificial offering the things he values least.

The Doom of the Defiant.—From this we pass (vers. xvii. 2-7) to sentence on those who, forgetful of command, oblivious of past mercies, have forsaken Jehovah and fallen away to idolatry. There is enquiry, evidence, and, on proof, death by stoning. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (x. 28, 29) helps us to find a message for others than these defaulters. " He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses," how much sorer the punishment of those who sin wilfully after they have " received the knowledge of the truth." Well does the familiar prayer of the Litany befit us :

"From contempt of Thy word and commandment, Good Lord, deliver us." And with our prayer we may recall the Psalmist's assurance (Ps. cxix. 1, 2):

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.

"Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart."

XIX

HIGH OFFICE, GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

Deut. xvi. 18–20, xvii. 8–xviii

High Officers.—Here are four high offices, each carrying with it great responsibility. No man could be Judge, King, Priest, or Prophet without facing duties of serious import to others. But each one is here viewed as definitely answerable not only to the people but to God. They are His officers and are responsible to Him.

Judges.—In the case of the Judges, it was said earlier in Deut. (i. 17), " The judgement is God's." They acted for Him, as was, later on, most significantly expressed in the charge of Jehoshaphat when he " set judges in the land " : " Take heed what ye do ; for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, Who is with you in the judgement " (2 Chron. xix. 6). Righteous dealing is especially needed in those whose office makes them powerful in the lives or the interests of their fellow-men. And the " unjust judge " is a familiar figure in the East.

Kings.—In the case of a King the demand was indeed to come from the people ; xvii. 14 very closely suggesting the actual request presented to Samuel by the Elders of Israel (1 Sam. viii. 5, 6). But the Lord is the King-Maker, for the King should be one " whom the Lord thy God shall choose " (ver. 15). He is to rule in the spirit of the law given from God. To this end the law as so given is to be his study. His copy of it is to be " with him," at his side for ready reference, that, like Joshua (i. 8), he may " meditate therein day and night." And the study would be needed, for he, taken from amongst his brethren, must watch against the temptations of power and prerogative, lest he fall into the snare of pride

and luxury. The history of monarchs, whether in the Old Testament or in secular records, bears ample testimony to the greatness of their temptations, to the far-reaching results of powers misused, and to the burden of responsibility realised by those who would employ their powers aright.

Priests.—" The priests the Levites " are reminded of their peculiar relation to Jehovah. They are not to share in the division of the land ; they are otherwise provided for. " The Lord is their inheritance " (xviii. 2) ; the priest stands " to minister in the name of the Lord " (ver. 5), and shares in the offerings made to Him. St. Paul (1 Cor. ix. 13, 14) uses this ancient custom as an argument for the right of the Christian ministry to " live of the Gospel."

Prophets.—The office of the Prophet is joined with that of others who are office-bearers under the theocracy. His duties are directly related to the dangers which attend a people in touch with worshippers of other gods. Certain " abominations " (ver. 9) are marked out for condemnation : human sacrifice, the use of divination, resort to magic or sorcery. There is a better way. The prophet will provide a channel through which the word and commandments of the Lord may reach them. The prophet's responsibility is great. Death (ver. 20) is the lot of the man who presumes to go beyond the limits of the divine message.

—And the One Prophet.—Ancient Fathers of the Church, and many later writers, have seen in the appointment of " the prophet " a direct reference to Our Lord. That this is the primary reference seems impossible in view of the terms in which the office is discussed. For to identify " the prophet " with Our Lord associates Him with possibility of error and sin. Nevertheless, some reference to Messiah is not to be avoided, unless we are to disregard the identification in Acts iii. 22, 23. May we not, with Origen and a long line of writers

representing various schools of thought, look upon the original promise not only as covering the whole line of prophets, but as pointing also to the One in Whom that line culminated—the ideal prophet, Who alone perfectly fulfilled the conditions laid down, Who could say always, " the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's Which sent me " (John xiv. 24) ?

Offices for All.—Here, in all these details—whether referring to judges, kings, priests, or prophets—is a reminder that all men in their several stations have to serve in like manner. There is an office for the servant as well as for the master, for the led as well as for the leader, for the taught as well as for the teacher. This is so in every ordered community, but very especially so in a Christian community. For He Who " loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood " has also " made us kings and priests unto God and His Father " (Rev. i. 5, 6). He is a poor believer who does not see in the tasks of life the calls of an office in which he may serve God as well as man. It is good that the drift of feeling and even of legislation amongst us helps us more and more fully to realise our duties one to another. It is better still that we should realise this as in the presence of that Overlord Who will call for account of the use made of opportunity given.

Our Great Example.—Here indeed we see Our Lord bidding us to recall His own example, the life of the Son of God Who was amongst men " as he that serveth " (Luke xxii. 27). And this example stands out as the more wonderful when we see Him in offices suggested by this chapter. Is He not " to come to be our Judge," as the old Christian hymn reminds us ? Is He not our King, to Whom we owe loyal obedience and willing service ? Is He not our High Priest, Who " offered up Himself " and still " liveth to make intercession for us " in an " unchangeable priesthood " (Heb. vii. 24-28) ? Is He not Prophet as well as Priest and King ? In the

presence of that example, the humblest may well approach God in the prayer some good man composed in 1549. "O Lord God Almighty . . . leave us not, we beseech Thee, destitute of Thy manifold gifts, nor yet of grace to use them always to Thy honour and glory."

XX

THE REFUGE CITIES

Deut. xix. 1–13

We come now to laws affecting the relations of man with man. The law is not a code for the regulation of personal and private life only; it deals quite as freely with social responsibility, laying down directions designed for the due order and well-being of the community and of the nation. Some are of permanent value; some, local and temporary, are long out of date. But all had their reasons, and all repay consideration.

Homicide and its Penalty.—The first of these laws belongs to the series of enactments which lay stress on the value of human life, and by consequence provide against crimes of violence. The sentence recorded in Gen. ix. 6, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," appears again in Lev. xxiv. 17, "He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death," and is affirmed again in the account of the "six cities for refuge" given in Num. xxxv. 31. The wilful murderer receives the death sentence. The "avenger of blood," possibly the nearest kinsman of the slain, pursues the slayer that he may exact the assigned penalty.

The Slayer by Mischance.—But all murder is not wilful murder. A life might be taken by accident, by such a misadventure as ver. 5 describes; the man-slayer offends "unawares and unwittingly" (Josh. xx. 3). Yet a kinsman of the murdered man, knowing of the death but little of the circumstances, stirred to anger, "while his heart is hot" (ver. 6), might set off in haste to exact the death penalty. What hope of escape had the unhappy man-slayer? Vengeance might overtake him before time was

given for the facts to be known and innocence of malicious intent established. In the absence of explanation he stood condemned; and the known penalty was death. But here merciful provision is made. If the fugitive could but reach one of the appointed cities, at first three and then six in number, he was, his innocence once established, safe from vengeance. In that city he would, as set out in Josh. xx., state his case to the authorities. If the absence of malice and intent were proved, there he might dwell in security until the death of the High Priest. That ended his exile; he might return home in safety.

A Merciful Provision.—The enactment, though in detail elaborate, may seem to us but a rough and ready expedient by which some provision was made against a miscarriage of justice. But it offered at least a way by which the avenging kinsman might be saved in his turn from sin against a fellow-man. It secured to the accused, if he was able to take sanctuary, a fair trial. It allowed time for the anger of the pursuing kinsman to be displaced by a just view of the facts. Thus it might save "the avenger of blood" from adding sin of his own, premeditated and done in anger, to the accidental offence of the refugee.

—But not Contrary to Justice.—But the law of sanctuary provided no sure refuge for a guilty person, who hated his neighbour and would "lie in wait for him . . . and smite him mortally that he die" (ver. 11). For such also there was enquiry, apparently by "the elders of his city" (ver. 12), who would have him haled from his fancied security, and delivered "into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die" (ver. 12). Thus the law avoided the scandals which elsewhere arose under like provisions of sanctuary.

The Institution and its Developments.—In some respects the Refuge Cities suggest the person and work of Our Lord. But the analogy must not be pressed. It was

only the sinner by accident, without malice or intent, who found security in one of the appointed cities; but Christ is the spiritual refuge of all who flee to Him for succour. The asylum is fenced by the enquiry made by the Elders of the City. Having access to Christ is not conditioned by the enquiry or verdict of men. It should be remembered also that the principle involved is not peculiar to the Mosaic law. The Greeks and the Romans had cities which possessed the right of asylum. The privilege seems to have been abused, for Tiberius saw reason to curtail it. Under Constantine the privilege was transferred to the Christian temples. Scandal, such as Tiberius sought to abate, grew apace under appeal to the right of sanctuary in the Middle Ages. Thus a provision, originally made in the interests of justice, was prostituted to the ends sometimes of gross iniquity. There is no fear of such perversion where an offender seeks for sanctuary not in the provisions of man but in the Court of God's justice. No human law ordains that refuge, and no human authority can bar man's access to it.

The Unidentified Sins.—But, without seeking to make every detail of the ancient law match some merciful provision of the Gospel, we can still find food for reflection. The unpremeditated crime is marked as laying the doer open to punishment. St. Paul recalls the pardon of the wrong done before his conversion: "I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. i. 13). The sensitive soul cries out with the Psalmist, "Who can understand his errors?"—or, as the Prayer Book version has it, "Who can tell how oft he offendeth?"—"Cleanse Thou me from secret faults" (Ps. xix. 12). So St. Paul says, "I know nothing by [R.V., against] myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Cor. iv. 4).

The Great Refuge.—But it is not only so that Christ reveals Himself to man as the one sure Refuge. How often the soul, conscious of its own difficulties and needs,

can enter into the spirit of the Psalmist's cry (Ps. cxlii.), and sum up its desire and hope in the affirmation, " Thou art my refuge " ! Truly the Lord Jesus is our refuge when temptations are many and strong, when we may well cry, like the disciples in the boat, " Lord, save us ; we perish." He is the refuge of the soul conscious of sin, desiring pardon, and seeking the blessed assurance, " Thy sins be forgiven thee." He is the refuge of the soul tormented with doubt, troubled by the surrounding conflict of opinions and dogmas, criticism and challenge, but finding utterance for faith in another's witness, " Lord, to Whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life." He is the refuge of man or woman worn down in the struggle of life, feeling the burden of family responsibility and daily tasks, but hearing again and again the Voice which said, " Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He is the refuge of the soul in bereavement, in loneliness, in bodily suffering, in the hour of death. His promise is sure : " Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

XXI

NATIONAL, SOCIAL, AND PERSONAL DUTIES

Deut. xix. 11–xxii. 12

Laws for the Community.—If we would enter into the spirit of these laws we must keep in mind the conditions of the people to whom they were given, and find no fault with the way in which subjects having little obvious relation with each other are brought together in this book. We pass from the merciful ordinance of the Refuge Cities to the punishment of intentional homicide. There follows immediately the law forbidding the theft of another man's land (xix. 14), a crime known in all ages, a crime not unfamiliar in Hebrew history, a crime which amongst the Romans might be visited with death. It is not strange that divine law should enter into matters so domestic as the security of a man's boundaries and the tenure of his land. Order, mutual consideration, just dealing—no society can afford to deem these trifles.

Witnesses in Court.—We pass then to a law dealing with the trial of offenders. The testimony of a single witness is not to be admitted (xix. 15). The case of a false and malicious witness is dealt with in detail (xix. 16-21). From Ps. xxvii. 12, xxxv. 11, and Prov. xix. 5, 9, it may be inferred that the false witness, so recognised a personage in oriental life, was already familiar and feared. Such were readily obtained in the case of Our Lord.

Conduct in Warfare.—There follow laws regulating conduct in war-time. They at once condemn many of the practices then common amongst other nations, and not even rejected in our own day. They are prefaced by a reminder (xx. 1-4) that Jehovah will be with His people.

The conscription—if we may put it so—is not to include the man who has just built a house and not yet dedicated it by use; nor the man who has planted a vineyard but not yet gathered fruit; nor the newly betrothed; nor the coward. The exemption is based on the conviction that in all these cases the fighting-man would have no heart in his task. The treatment of enemies, as set out in vers. 10-15, is possibly more merciful than that which contemporary nations may have practised; but that ordained for the Canaanites (vers. 16, 17) follows the line taken in vii. 2-4. The measures are protective, designed to save Israel from being led astray from Jehovah. The methods of other nations find record in the Prophets, as in Hos. xiii. 16 and Amos i. 13, and in Elisha's reproach of Hazael (2 Kings viii. 12).

A Merciful Provision.—In startling contrast to these measures is the law (vers. 19, 20) which directs that the fruit-trees of a besieged city be spared. For the destruction of an enemy's fruit-trees was a common feature of warfare at the time, and the example has been followed in our own day. In the case of a besieger assured of victory the provision would only be an act of prudence; but there seems to be more than this here—a distinction between man, who is a conscious enemy, and the tree, which has no knowledge of friend or foe.

The Case of the "One found Slain."—From war-time usages we come back again to a case of homicide—that of "one . . . found slain . . . and it be not known who hath slain him" (xxi. 1-9). The land has been defiled with blood. But the evil-doer cannot be traced. The elders of the city "next unto the slain man" are directed to sacrifice a heifer, "to wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded," to declare their innocence, and to plead that the sin be not laid to their charge. The heifer represented the unknown murderer, and cannot —as some have suggested—be taken as a type of Christ. The evil-doer is not there to suffer the penalty of Gen. ix.

6 ; the heifer is made to suffer in his place ; the community has discharged its duty, and is free from blame—" The blood shall be forgiven them."

Regulations for Family Life.—The Code then passes abruptly to another rule for conduct in war-time—one of three regulations touching family life. The female captive, desired as a wife, is provided for (vers. 10-14). The right of the first-born son is protected against invasion by the child of a more favoured mother (vers. 15-17). The " stubborn and rebellious son," disobedient and a sensualist, is brought before the elders, and by " the men of his city " put to death. The parent himself had not—as at Rome—this power ; judgement and its execution are the work of the community. There follows a law as to executions. The body of a malefactor convicted of a capital charge, and, after execution, hanged " on a tree," was directed to be taken down at nightfall. The hanging served as a public example ; the removal of the body at nightfall delivered the land from pollution by its presence.

Neighbourly Acts Directed.—Simple ways of helping a neighbour are not forgotten. Stealing by finding and keeping is an offence known to English law. It is made one here, if man transgress the law set out in xxii. 1-4. Put positively, it comes to the injunction, " All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them " (Matt. vii. 12). The law, as St. Paul puts it (Gal. v. 14), " is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Sex Distinguished by Clothing.—In forbidding man to appear in woman's clothing, or woman in man's (xxii. 5), some heathen customs known to the Canaanites are aimed at. Modern law recognises the same dangers ; some recently observed tendencies appear to make light of them. Nor is modern feeling equally in accord with the law (xxii. 6) as to the bird's nest and the sitting mother ; as to the battlements on the house-top (ver. 8) ; the law

as to unaccustomed ways of sowing, of plowing, of weaving, or the use of a distinctive fringe upon clothing (vers. 9–12).

The Purposes behind the Laws.—All these laws serve to show how fully the Israelite was bidden to remember his peculiar relationship to Jehovah. Offences are not matters for the individual or the community alone ; they are to be dealt with as offences against God. Doubtless they needed the constant reminder. So do we. Immunity from guilt under the law of the land does not necessarily mean that there is no guilt before God. Social duties are not merely matters between man and man and nothing more ; there is always the responsibility to God. If, under Moses, the Israelite was urged always to live, in peace or in war, with remembrances of his relation to Jehovah, how much more should they who, under the Gospel, are not their own but are " bought with a price " ?

XXII

GUIDANCE FOR PERSONAL AND SOCIAL LIFE

Deut. xxii. 13–xxv

Faith and Practice.—It is sometimes alleged against religion—whether Christian or non-Christian—that it is unpractical. The accusation does not lie at the door of Christianity but of its professors ; it is an indictment not so much of the faith itself as of those who hold it. No one, for example, could charge the Bible with being an unpractical volume. In the Old Testament its poetry is as fully charged with moral instruction as its history ; its Wisdom literature is as definite in teaching as its legal codes. So also in the New Testament ; Christianity there is as plainly a rule of conduct as a Creed. Our Lord and His Apostles in their teaching are as much concerned with the life that now is as with the life that is to come.

Definite Duties.—These chapters are wholly practical. As they stand, they deal, in what seems to us rather an irregular and spasmodic way, with personal and social duties of an intimate nature. Personal purity, personal uprightness, personal respect for the rights of others—these are touched on in regard to the relations of the sexes, the obligations of matrimony, and the duty towards a neighbour. In each case it is the personal responsibility that is pressed home. The offence is clearly marked out ; the offender is never left in doubt as to his position. Everything is plain and simple. Is there offence ? Then justice must be done.

Personal Responsibility.—Personal responsibility is everywhere the leading thought. It is strongly marked, although the laws given are laws with a social as well

as a personal aspect ; though they are laws for the profit of the community as well as the safeguarding of the individual. There is nothing said or ordered that can belittle the responsibility of man or woman. There is nothing here to sap the independence of the individual ; to encourage in any man's mind the idea that it is the business of other people to care for him, supply his needs, protect him against himself, and bear for him the blame of his misdeeds. There is social law and social benevolence ; there is the well-being of the society to be thought of. But it is the individual who must act and be responsible for his actions.

Plain Speaking as to Purity.—This personal responsibility finds emphasis in the laws as to personal purity in man and in woman. Virtue is to be treasured ; virtue is to be defended. The presence of social evils in their worst form—the sins of the flesh in their familiar and in their viler phases—is recognised and legislated for. The law is not afraid to speak plainly about base and degrading things. It has no fellowship with the policy of silence ; it does not believe in a pretence that all is well when everybody knows that much is ill. It does not argue in technical language about sex impulses or complexes, or try to throw a veil of philosophical apology over the coarseness of an unregulated life. It asks for personal purity in man and in woman, and only knows of lapse therefrom as offence against God.

—And Marriage and the Home.—The law is not less zealous for the sanctity of marriage and for the safeguarding of the home. With the Hebrews the home had its religious as well as its social aspect. It was the prescribed scene of certain rites and observances ; it had thus its recognised place in the religious life of the nation. Ps. cxxvii. and cxxviii. reflect the feeling of the nation as to the home and the joys of parentage. Jacob's reply to Esau, " The children which God hath graciously given thy servant " (Gen. xxxiii. 5) illustrates the view taken

then of offspring; the vow of Hannah (1 Sam. i. 11) shows us the passionate yearning of the Hebrew wife for a child, especially a male child.

—*Still needed.*—The conditions of modern life have seriously impaired the older views of the home and the family. The home has become less permanent as a centre of family life. Some tendencies of thought amongst the young suggest that the home is rather a place from which early escape is sought than a centre towards which thought and affection readily turn. This tendency may, in places, be due to the influence of direct teaching which aims at the break-up of the family tradition; but it may be more widely caused by the general unrest. Meanwhile the family and the home hold their place in Christian thought as helping us to a better understanding of our relation to God. He is still "Our Father"; we are still His "sons"; the Father's "house" still has its places prepared for the faithful. Nothing in Our Lord's teaching must be read as disparagement of home or of family ties, even though He warn us that, should the claim of kindred be in conflict with His own claims, only one decision is possible for the true disciple.

—*And as to Vows.*—In comparison with the care of personal rectitude in the face of the temptations of the flesh, the matter of vows may seem of small importance. But at the time the Hebrews may have thought otherwise. The making of vows, of solemn promises to perform some religious duty, to offer some sacrifice, is a familiar feature of Old Testament life. It was not, of course, a custom peculiar to the Hebrews. Its regulation by definite law rather suggests that the aim was to purge the practice of defects which were inconsistent with the service of Jehovah. In this spirit strict performance of the obligation is required. The way of those who would vow in haste and afterwards "make enquiry" (Prov. xx. 25), who would delay performance of the obligation

(Eccles. v. 4, 5), supply reason for the plain direction, "thou shalt not slack to pay it . . . it would be sin in thee" (xxiii. 21).

Our Own Peril.—Alas, such slackness is not unknown even now. Are there not people who, in the face of a threatened disaster or under the pressure of bodily affliction, have cried, "If only I am spared this, I will . . ."? We all do well to search our memories, and see whether there be any old promises to God which somehow or other have been forgotten and fulfilment neglected. The Psalmist shows us the right way when he says, "I will pay Thee my vows which my lips have uttered . . . when I was in trouble" (Ps. lxvi. 13, 14).

Laws of Exclusion.—With laws of exclusion we need not tarry save to warn ourselves against cherishing the memory of old wounds and old wrongs. No Christian will seek to perpetuate hostility between nations because of past strife. But "love your enemies" was never a command easy of obedience. Not without reason does the ancient Litany hold the petition, "From . . . hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, Good Lord, deliver us."

One Warning, One Appeal.—But all laws have one warning and one appeal. They point to the perils of indifference and of self-confidence; of ignoring temptations which lurk in the ordinary ways and duties of life. They bid us think of acts of propriety, as well as of the more serious responsibilities. They forbid us to be careless of conduct in lesser things, for so laxity may spread and greater evil creep unsuspected upon us. And they make an unceasing appeal to have in mind not only our duty to God but also His ever-present care for us. We enter into the spirit of those laws with the happy consciousness of Our Lord's teaching as to the Father's love. Each of us might say, as Henry Vaughan did nearly three hundred years ago :—

" He keeps me safe from every ill,
Doth all my foes control ;
He is a shield and shelter still
Unto my very soul.

" Whether abroad, amidst the crowd,
Or else within my door,
He is my pillar and my cloud
Now and for evermore."

XXIII

THANKSGIVING, PROFESSION, APPEAL

Deut. xxvi

We have reached the end of this legal code. And it closes in the same strain as has been heard in earlier chapters. For now two striking ceremonies and a brief appeal repeat the thoughts which have occurred again and again. All three bid the people keep in mind the mercies which the Lord their God has showered upon them ; the appeal exhorts them to do their part in the covenant between their God and themselves.

The Thanksgiving.—As years went on, as generation succeeded generation, did the touching ceremony described in vers. 1-11 lose its character and become a mere formality ? At first, when they were but newly come to the land of promise, a faithful Israelite may have done his part with some measure of pride as well as of gratitude. When at the central sanctuary he brought his basket of first-fruits, and saw the priest " set it down before the altar of the Lord," he may have made his personal thanksgiving with full consciousness of the change in the fortunes of his people as well as of his personal mercies. Truly there was a striking contrast between Jacob the wanderer and Israel in possession of the promised land. " A Syrian [or Aramean] ready to perish was my father " ; and for " ready to perish " the R.V. offers the more suggestive alternatives, " or, wandering, or, lost." " He went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few " ; his children became there " a nation, great, mighty, and populous." From that house of bondage the Lord brought them out " with a mighty hand," and led them to " a land that floweth with milk and honey." Well might the Israelite,

with thankful recollection of all this, present his offering of first-fruits.

—*A Family Rejoicing.*—But with public and thankful acknowledgment of God's mercies to His people, there is to go also personal and family rejoicing " in every good thing which the Lord Thy God hath given unto thee and unto thine house " (ver. 11). Here is an echo of the command in Deut. xvi. 11, another suggestion of a family festival in which remembrance of God's goodness to the family is joined with remembrance of mercies to the nation. There are, no doubt, families in which thanksgiving might be made much in the fashion of " A Syrian ready to perish was my father." There are many more in which the rejoicing might be encouraged for a wider reason, for " all the good things " of personal, home, and family life. Doubtless it is parents who are most often moved to such thanksgivings. In quiet moments at home the mind goes back, perhaps to early struggles, perhaps to times of grave anxiety happily relieved, perhaps to the progress of the children now grown up. And the mind that sees the goodness of God in all the mercies of the past willingly echoes the Psalmist's cry, " Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." It rejoices in all the good things which the Lord has given.

A Solemn Profession.—Upon this joyful thanksgiving there was to follow a profession of obedience (vers. 12-14). The command put the worshipper to a test. " Thou shalt say before the Lord thy God "—what ? That he had strictly carried out the prescribed duties ; " I have not transgressed Thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them. . . . I have hearkened unto the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that Thou hast commanded me." It was a profession of obedience as to certain duties ; a profession that might sometimes have been made perfunctorily and with little feeling. Under the scrutiny of Our Lord's method, enquiry would be made not only as to exact performance

of the ceremony, but also as to the spirit in which it was done. Did the giver discharge his duty with honest love towards others? Was he zealous not to transgress because he was really grateful to Jehovah? Had he, in other words, been not a person who practised a kind of ritual but a true servant of Jehovah, sharing with others some of the good things given to himself?

With a Message to Ourselves.—Perhaps some erred, as we might err ourselves. There is a giving which has little true love of God or man behind it. And the best may grow thoughtless and mechanical in discharge of this office. There was deep knowledge of mankind in St. Paul's reminder, "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor . . . and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 3). And without that spirit in our giving we cannot rightly join the Israelite and say, "I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God."

And an Appeal.—But after the protestation there was to come appeal (ver. 15). No true heart could ask for heaven's blessing on the nation without recognising that the appeal was made on the basis of a covenant between Jehovah and His chosen. That God would be faithful to His promises was certain; had He not taken them as "His peculiar people" (ver. 18)? Would the compact be kept as faithfully by the other side? Would each and all in Israel take Jehovah to be their God and hearken unto His voice (ver. 17)? We know how ill this duty was discharged.

A Covenant Slighted.—The covenant was slighted. Perhaps, after a generation or two, the wonder of Jehovah's goodness was taken much as a matter of course. The choice of one family, the watchful care, the guiding hand, and the mighty hand became bits of national history and lost their personal appeal. We do well to beware lest something of the sort happen with us. Our God has avouched us also to be His people. He has given us a greater than Moses, for He "sent His only begotten Son

into the world that we might live through Him " (1 John iv. 9). We have always been so familiar with the fact that the wonder of the Almighty's love may escape us. And of our Mediator Himself, because we have always known about His love, there is too little thought of what His life, His death, for us, implied. Yet reflection drives us to such thought as Samuel Crossman (for a few weeks Dean of Bristol) put into verse long ago :—

" My song is love unknown ;
My Saviour's love to me ;
Love to the loveless shown,
That they might lovely be.
O, who am I,
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die ? "

" That thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord Thy God " (ver. 19) is still His gracious purpose for us. Like the Psalmist (cxix. 57) we may say, " Thou art my portion, O Lord : I have said that I would keep Thy words." But what " grace for grace," what continued accessions of grace, are needed if we would be true to our promise !

XXIV

MEMORIALS FOR ALL

Deut. xxvii. 1–8

With what insistence did the law seek to win obedience from the Israelites! It is as though one had said to them, "You must not forget. You shall not forget." And yet forget they did.

Another Aid to Memory.—Here is another aid to memory. The crossing of Jordan was to be marked by the setting up of great stones, covered with plaister the more readily to provide for inscription of laws upon them. Besides these "great stones" there was to be built an altar, that offerings might be made before the Lord. It was done (Joshua viii. 30-32). Here in this ceremony was one more witness against the people if they forgot the Lord their God.

Do such Memorials Help?—Could such memorials help? Laban and Jacob no doubt thought so when they set up their stones of witness (Gen. xxxi. 45, 46). Joshua saw in stones taken from the bed of Jordan an incentive to memory of a great national event (Joshua iv. 1-9). Later on he set up a stone of witness, "lest ye deny your God" (Joshua xxiv. 27). Such acts are all of a piece with our own readiness to raise up War Memorials, to erect statues of the great or good, to place memorials over graves, and to note by tablet or inscription houses associated with the lives of famous persons. Their value depends upon the extent to which their presence is taken note of, and the spirit in which such observation is made. They may become wholly or almost wholly valueless; their appeal no longer felt, or felt only by the few. Numbers of Israelites may have passed and probably did pass by the Jordan stones, which the Book of Joshua noted as "there

unto this day " (iv. 9), with complete unconcern ; but still to others they may have spoken again and again with a penetrating and moving message. So it may be with us.

Messages for all who will hear.—For everybody there are stones of memorial, in house or church or school or college ; in office, factory, and workshop—places that speak of some period, some experience, in our own lives, and suggest self-scrutiny. They may arouse memories that are sad or memories that are glad. The value of the recollection will depend upon ourselves. We can make each a means of grace. For each may set us thinking of our own covenant with God, may move to thankful remembrance of His mercies, and send us on our way the better for looking once again upon those stones of memorial. The sensitive soul finds the world full of such incentives to memory, and using them finds ever fresh values in what to the careless are but bricks—or stones—and mortar. " Sermons in stones " are preached to all, though all do not know it. " He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Memory an Incentive to Worship.—But the setting up of a memorial does not here stand alone ; " There thou shalt build an altar unto the Lord thy God " (ver. 5). A public act of worship accompanied the building up and inscription of the great stones. What could be more natural ? Here was the memorial, here the reminder of all God's guiding and protecting mercies, here the pledge of His future guardianship of the people, did they but remain faithful to Him. But here also were a people who knew what defects had appeared in their past loyalty to Jehovah ; who knew what blindness, what wilfulness, what flagrant disobedience had marked the nation's past. What more fitting than a solemn act of worship ? It was more than a solemn sanctification of the national memorial ; it was an admission that only in dependence on Jehovah could they hope to do their part. So for us, every message from a memorial bids us lift our hearts to God, and invites to warm remembrance for His mercies.

—*And thereafter.*—A great throng may attend a great ceremonial. It ends, and the throng disperses. There follows the return to ordinary life. Men and women, deeply touched, it may be, by some solemn act of worship, pass from it to confront the customary conditions of work or of leisure. Men and women who have gone apart with others at gatherings meant to deepen their realisation of God, and to learn more of His purposes for them, must needs come to everyday life at home, in their society, in their conditions of work. Then comes the test. It came to the Israelites, who left the memorial stones and the altar behind them, passing to face new temptations. It comes to all who, from seasons, long or short, of spiritual exaltation, return again to confront the new conditions which the new hours of life shall bring. Not all, to the bitter shame of some, survive the test.

Daily Help Needed.—It is not enough to have our memorial stones ; not enough to be deeply stirred from time to time by such appeals ; not enough to be for a little while on a Mount of Transfiguration. There is more needed ; the daily help, the daily renewal ; the daily drawing of new strength from the God Who can supply all our needs. How well the Psalmist, in varying moods, sets out our needs ! Are we just conscious how wholly we are dependent on God ? Then we may cry, " Deal bountifully with Thy servant, that I may live and keep Thy word " (Ps. cxix. 17). Are we conscious of our own weakness ? Then we may pray, " Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe " (Ps. cxix. 117). Are we depressed in spirit ? Then we may plead, " Rejoice the soul of Thy servant, for unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul " (Ps. lxxxvi. 4). Happy the grateful heart which, fresh from some reminder of things done or suffered in the past, can say, " I have trusted in Thy mercy ; my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord because He hath dealt bountifully with me " (Ps. xiii. 5, 6).

XXV

THE SINNER DENOUNCED

Deut. xxvii. 9–26

HERE, in vers. 9 and 10, is one more reminder of the peculiar relation in which the people stand to Jehovah, and one more appeal for obedience to His laws. From this we pass to a solemn ratification of the covenant, associated with the proclamation of curses upon the faithless and blessings on the faithful.

Imprecation First.—The curses have precedence. The Levites are to " say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice " (ver. 14)—and what they have to say is by way of imprecation against sinners. Why this precedence? Does it suggest the sinful nature of man—more ready to disobedience than to obedience? Or is it no more than a way of presenting the law, by stating prohibition and attaching sentence of condemnation to the offender? For our own purpose we may take it as pointing to the truth expressed by Jeremiah, " The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked : who can know it ? " (xvii. 9) ; and by the author of Ecclesiastes when he said, " The heart of the sons of men is full of evil " (ix. 3). Our Lord put the same truth in more detail : " Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies " (Matt. xv. 19). The proneness to evil is there. It is recognised at once ; men are warned and threatened—threatened in the sense of having the divine displeasure plainly stated. Later on the displeasure takes a more definite and tragic form.

—*With Dangers in View.*—Will any suggest that the

imprecations here delivered seem inadequately to cover the possibilities of evil-doing? If explanation is sought, may we not infer that the choice of particular offences might readily have been understood by those who heard the curses delivered? What is here chosen for condemnation may have been sins common enough amongst the peoples round about them; practices that passed without censure in the land to which the people were going. A singling out of offences which to us may seem strange may, at the time and place and for the person concerned, have been the very choice needed.

—*And a Wide Treatment.*—In one particular the choice of sins for denunciation has an obvious lesson. There are offences noted that might escape observation; and some that might stand outside ordinary human law. But the requirements of divine justice go beyond those of human legislation. In the eye of God a sin is not the less a sin because there are no human witnesses to bear testimony against the sinner, or because in some human code of laws there are no penalties attaching to such acts. There are "works of the flesh" which are "manifest" (Gal. v. 19–21), and "some men's sins are evident" (1 Tim. v. 24, R.V.).

Condemnation and Discipline.—It is well that the voice of condemnation be heard. There is a sternness which is very merciful in that it often reveals to a wrong-doer the quality of his sin. There is a discipline which is very tender, for it often brings the sinner to repentance. Many might make the prayer of that Scottish worthy, Drummond of Hawthornden:—

"Hear me, O God!
A broken heart
Is my best part:
Use still Thy rod
That I may prove
Therein Thy love.

" If Thou hadst not
Been stern to me,
But left me free,
I had forgot
Myself and Thee.

" For Sin 's so sweet
As minds ill bent
Rarely repent
Until they meet
Their punishment."

There are—as the law both in Leviticus and in this Book reminds us—sins done in ignorance ; but still sins, for, as St. Paul says, " I know nothing against myself, yet am I not hereby justified " (1 Cor. iv. 4, R.V.). There are also, as the Psalmist knew (Ps. xix. 12, xc. 8), " secret " or " hidden " sins, such as the Apostle warned the Ephesians against (Eph. v. 12). Open and detailed condemnation is better than a conspiracy of silence or vague, generalised indictment.

—*And Comprehensive.*—Short as the list of imprecations is, man's duty to God and to his neighbour is representatively included in it. For even the sins of impurity, sins against self, are also sins against others. And lest there should grow up in any a self-righteous spirit ; lest the man who was neither idolater, nor adulterer, nor land-stealer, nor an accessory to murder, should think of himself as walking uprightly just because he was not a gross and patent offender, there is denounced the man " that maketh the blind to wander out of the way " (ver. 18).

Two Appeals.—Perhaps to most of those who read these imprecations their plain words make two appeals. One asks from them thanksgiving—gratitude for the mercy of God, Who enables His people to pass unscathed amidst the grosser temptations of the world and the flesh. They know enough of themselves to recognise dangers

escaped, the weakness of their own nature, and the Power which saved them. The other appeal is that they may be given a greater sensitiveness in regard to evil, a keener eye for their own weaknesses, a sterner view of peculiarities of temperament or habit which others may be ready to pass over as " little weaknesses." With some there is a strange readiness to regard certain irregularities or inconsistencies as parts of themselves, mere personal characteristics, which are not to be regarded as definite transgressions.

Many years ago John Jackson, who became Bishop of London, published a book on *The Sinfulness of Little Sins*. He had, no doubt, marked down this weakness in some Christian characters—a studied and careful uprightness in greater things, marred by defects of temper or faults of habit which seemed to escape notice. The victims of this self-deception may not have had the boastful self-righteousness of the Pharisee, who thanked God that he was not as other men were ; but they sinned with the Pharisee in supposing that they had fulfilled the law whilst they had clean forgotten some serious matters of detail. They, like all the wise and prudent, might well pray for " a right judgement in all things," and cry to God with one of old, " Let my heart be sound [R.V., perfect] in Thy Statutes, that I be not ashamed " (Ps. cxix. 80).

XXVI

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE: I

Deut. xxviii

The Choice laid Open.—A great alternative is now set before the people. They have heard the law; they have been reminded again and again of their indebtedness to Jehovah; they have been warned of His requirements; they have been cautioned as to the dangers which will beset them in the new land into which they are about to enter. Now they have before them a great alternative. They may be true to their God; and in that case blessings will be showered upon them. They may be traitors to the covenant with Him; in that case their sin will bring deadly punishment in its train. They have, like those to whom Joshua spoke (xxiv. 15), to choose whom they will serve.

An Appeal Made.—The nature of this alternative is set before the people in great detail. If imagination is for the moment touched by the prospect of such blessing as held the promise not only of individual but of national progress and power, it is also appealed to in the detailed assurance of such reward for sin as might well shake the resolution of the most careless or the most determined evil-doer. If the blessings are great, the curses are appalling in their picture of personal suffering and national disaster. And the whole statement is marked by a feeling so intense, and a rhetorical power so marked, that it has no rival even amongst the impassioned utterances of the greater prophets.

—With Intense Personal Feeling.—In its message to ourselves some of its characteristics at once impress themselves. The presentation of the alternative is marked by

intense personal feeling. There are deliverances which follow similar lines in Exod. xxiii. 20-33 and Lev. xxvi. 3-45 ; but these are not marked by the same passionate appeal. We seem to find ourselves in the presence of a leader stirred by intense consciousness of his people's opportunities and his people's frailties. He is incapable of adjusting what he has to say that he may not offend the susceptibilities of his hearers. He recites blessings and curses as though they were not predictive but already facts. He sees both the one and the other with a clearness of vision which makes every detail stand out with startling distinctness. He is a seer before whose eyes the promised blessings already materialise and the curses fall with deadly purpose upon man and beast.

A Contrast Suggested.—How different this intensity of realisation, this sureness of touch from much of modern preaching. Here are no vague generalities, no careful avoidance of awkward subjects, no selection of safe and conventional objects of denunciation, no watering down of divine imprecations. But it will not do to think of pulpit errors only. Is not the individual very prone to act in this way for himself ? Is there not in self-examination the constant danger of slurring over and excusing our own defects ? Is it not for all a much easier thing to see the mote in our brother's eye than to discover the beam in our own ? " O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me," says the Psalmist (cxxxix. 1). Our own searching is less complete.

A Nation Involved.—This appeal is not only intense in its fervour, it is strongly national in its feeling. The promise of national advancement is, however, made conditional. For they are to be placed in a position of singular prominence ; " all the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord " (ver. 10). It is as though all other nations should recognise that Israel was in the ownership and care of Jehovah. The fear inspired (ver. 10) would be fear not so much of the

nation by itself, as of the nation and the great Overlord Who was its protector. Such a fear would be justified, for even a little people, inspired by such promises as those of ver. 7, would be a serious adversary for enemies far more numerous and of greater standing in the world.

With National Responsibilities.—But this prominence would have its responsibilities. Israel if faithful would find a place of eminence and of power amongst the nations. The required fidelity would imply a just use of these powers as they touched other peoples as well as themselves. Obedience to the law would call for a right discharge of duties towards neighbouring nations as well as in their own domestic life. In particular their separation as a people faithful to the covenant between themselves and their God would be to other nations a witness against paganism and its fruits.

Our Own?—It has been sought to draw a parallel between the promises here made to Israel and the position of our own nation. Truly God has set us "on high." He has given us a pre-eminence greater than any bestowed on Israel. He has charged us with responsibilities towards other nations and peoples beyond all comparison with those of Israel. But we cannot claim to have been "an holy people"; we have fallen short of our possibilities; we have sinned, and we have suffered. If we would do better, if we would seek the blessings and avoid the curses, we must spend less time in blaming leaders and guides, and more time in working for individual regeneration. When the majority of the people are seeking truly to serve God, there will not be much hesitation as to national duty at home or abroad.

And Our Dangers.—The curses have their own warning for us. The savagery of pagan foes, piling horror upon horror, may seem to some remote from the possibilities of a civilised age. Let us not be too sure; we have had our warnings. But the withdrawal of God's guidance may bring upon a nation evils as sore as famine and defeat.

There is a moral decay that may come with comfort and plenty ; there is a decadence that appears more surely in the times of peace and plenty than in the hour of national anguish. Well does the Litany bid us pray, not only " in all time of our tribulation," but also " in all time of our wealth, Good Lord, deliver us."

XXVII

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE: II

Deut. xxix., xxx

The Same Alternative Presented.—Whether the opening verse of this chapter refers to the charge in the preceding chapter or to the words which follow is, for devotional purposes, immaterial. Here is a further address, again presenting the alternative, obedience or disobedience, blessing or curse. But first the people are again reminded (xxix. 2-8) of all that Jehovah had done for them in Egypt and in bringing them to the new land. Then they are called upon to enter into further covenant with the Lord their God, and warned anew of the penalties that lapse from it will bring (xxix. 9-29). There follows the assurance that return to God and obedience to His Voice will bring pardon, release from captivity, resumption of prosperity and restoration of divine favour (xxx. 1-10). Then, in words of tenderest solicitude, the responsibility of choosing between obedience and disobedience, life and death, blessing and cursing, is set before the people (xxx. 11-20).

Presumption.—This final charge has some things that appeal very directly to ourselves. There are plain words (in xxix. 19) directed against the presumptuous person, who, despite the warning as to God's just anger, still flatters himself that he will "have peace," though he walk in the stubbornness of his heart. These are the "rebellious children" of Isa. xxx. 1; the people who say, "How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" (Ps. lxxiii. 11). They have their successors in every generation. Where there is inclination to sin there is an easy passage to the belief that, after all, the

sin may not be found out. But " the Lord will not spare him."

Repentance Encouraged.—Restoration, after repentance under discipline, is (xxx. 1-10) a promise full of comfort to the anxious. If Israel might return from captivity and find reinstatement, so also might the repentant sinner of another people and another age. And, as with the Israelite pardon would be followed by blessing, so also with the Christian forgiveness opens the door to new service. " The Lord will again rejoice over thee for good " is a promise as sure now as in Moses' day. It inspires with new hope the soul, conscious of its own weakness, but looking for protection, guidance, and power for service from Him Who is " faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness " (1 John i. 9).

Responsibility for Knowledge Enforced.—The responsibility of knowledge is next urged upon the people. The commandment is neither hidden, nor far off, but " very nigh," known and understood (vers. 11-14). " Take heed how ye hear " (Luke viii. 18) and " Take heed what ye hear " (Mark iv. 24) are warnings from Our Lord not to be overlooked when obedience to command is in question. " I did not know " is a common excuse when knowledge might have been had. " I did not think " is a variant, implying that knowledge was there but received no attention. But how often is the knowledge allowed to be " hidden " ! There are those in sorrow, who know of One Who can wipe away tears, and yet never go to Him for reassurance of His love, for understanding of His dealings, for patience under trial, or for hope and courage. There are those in perplexity, not knowing, as they say, " which way to turn," who yet forget to use their knowledge of a Holy Spirit that might give them the " right judgement " and resolve all their doubts. There are those who are tempted to overstep the mark of honesty or truth, and half-persuaded to find excuse in the thought that the

line of distinction is not quite plain. In all such cases the commandment is not "far off." "This is the way, walk ye in it" is the message of the voice at hand (Isa. xxx. 21). To neglect warning is to ask for discipline. There is sorrow foretold for the "servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will" (Luke xii. 47).

Choice Inevitable.—And now the great alternative is set out once more (vers. 15-20). Choice is inevitable. All have set before them day by day "life and good and death and evil." No doubt many people live in virtual ignorance or forgetfulness of such choice having to be made. They choose nevertheless. For the commandment is not "far off." To ignore it, to go on giving it no attention, to find no room for thought about it, to be indifferent whether it is obeyed or not—this, after all, is to choose, and to make the wrong choice. "He that is not with Me is against Me" is not a hard saying, but a kindly warning against the fatal ease of indifference, neglect or procrastination.

—Of Immeasurable Importance.—The choice is of immeasurable importance. It is deciding for "life and good" or for "death and evil." The right choice has the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8). But its happiness is not to be thought of as solely or even mainly prospective—something to be garnered rather hereafter than here and now. For there is a happiness in the present life of faith which is real, definite, and very comprehensive. It is not dependent on prosperity or freedom from anxiety or completeness of bodily health; it is not contingent on the provision of ever fresh excitements or toilfully sought pleasures; it has no direct relation with rank or money; it is open to every true servant. The quiet faith of those who rightly choose was well expressed by the Welshman, Henry Vaughan, in the verses quoted on page 103.

—*Having Purpose and Promise.*—This good choice has its purpose and its promise (ver. 20). It is a decision that commits us to loving God, and that calls down upon us the blessings of God. Love of God grows with intimacy with Him ; blessings, like " grace for grace," multiply with the days. That love weans from the evil of the world, is perfected by obedience, and rejoices in sacrifice. It is moved with a yearning more and more fully to obey ; and so it may put its petition in the old words of the Sarum Primer (1514) :—

" God be in my head,
And in my understanding ;

" God be in my eyes,
And in my looking ;

" God be in my mouth,
And in my speaking ;

" God be in my heart,
And in my thinking ;

" God be at my end,
And at my departing."

XXVIII

MOSES AND JOSHUA

Deut. xxxi. 1–15

The Old Leader and the New.—In the biographies of men who have lived long and done much there is always, or nearly always, a tinge of sadness in the record of their last years. Commonly there is the story of diminished activity, of lessened powers, of gradual failure. It is hardly so in the case of Moses, for we pass without warning of decay or failure to the record of his last acts and his death. No doubt the intimation that he must not pass over Jordan into the promised land prepares us for the end; but this does not in itself suggest any decay of power. His work, however, is nearly done; the time draws near when he must hand over office and leadership to a younger man.

The Succession Ordered.—The successor has been chosen and appointed (Num. xxvii. 22, 23). There is a solemn assembly at which the retiring and the succeeding leaders are present, and a charge is given to Joshua (vers. 7, 8, 14, 15). Some of the sorrows of laying down office, some of the difficulties of assuming office, are here wanting. For the choice and the appointment are not in the hands of men but of Jehovah. Both for Moses and for Joshua the matter is settled without their own movement. And all must be well both for the old leader now nearing his end and for the young successor about to assume high office.

Path and Task Assigned.—It is the privilege of those who trust in the guidance of God to believe that their way will be marked out for them and their duties assigned. They are not to sit idle, to excuse lazy indifference by the

plea that "the Lord will provide." Industry, intelligence, zeal, circumspection, and foresight are required from them; but they leave the outcome to safer guidance than that of personal ambition. In the Old Testament specific direction is repeatedly given in so many words to those for whom God has work. The direction is still given, and given quite as plainly, to those who wait and watch for intimation. It is still true, as Bunyan made the shepherd boy sing, that

> "He that is humble ever shall
> Have God to be his guide."

—*And Limitations Imposed.*—But the transfer of office had two sides to it. There was the side of Moses. With some it is not easy to recognise that much of the strength of other days is gone; that neither body nor mind is capable of all that once it was. To part with authority and power, if for some a relief, is to others a trial. They do not like to let the reins fall from their hands. They cannot at first look on with contentment when others fill the old places and others take up the old duties. It is this unhappy clinging to power which so often leads to sorrow, even to disaster. But the wise, the children of light, recognise their limitations, and pass without repining into the background. They of all people learn to grow old gracefully.

New Tasks Assigned.—There is the side of Joshua. He was no untried or inexperienced successor. With Moses he had shared the intimacies of the Sinai revelation (Exod. xxiv. 13); he had gone down with him to meet the apostasy of the people; he had proved himself in battle (Exod. xvii. 9, 10); he had, under the searching eye of Jehovah, shown himself "a man in whom is the spirit" (Num. xxvii. 18). Now he is to take up the work of leadership and control carried on hitherto by Moses. Such a succession might have tempted some to pride and self-sufficiency, and some, perhaps, to the self-indulgence

which assured position might bring. Joshua remained true to Jehovah. But not all can, as he did, bear promotion unchanged in character and habit and reach the top without shedding some of the finer virtues which helped to bring them there.

—*With Words of Encouragement.*—Joshua had a hard task before him, and, that he may face that task in good heart, there is a message for him. "Encourage him" was twice the direction given to Moses when his successor was designated (i. 38, iii. 28). And now firm assurance is made—"Be strong and of a good courage. . . . And the Lord, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee" (vers. 7, 8). Here truly is great encouragement. It was something that the old leader, who knew the spirit of his successor, could say these words. The voice of experience is valued by those with great enterprise before them. The goodwill of an honoured predecessor is of value to one with new and onerous tasks to perform. Encouragement from Moses was no light thing therefore to Joshua.

—*From Jehovah through Moses.*—But these heartening words come after all from a higher source, and have higher authority behind them. The command is from the Lord God of Israel; the encouragement is from Him. In the same spirit David bade Solomon address himself to a great task (1 Chron. xxviii. 20); in the same spirit St. Paul bade the Ephesians "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Eph. vi. 10). That is the message to Hebrew of old, to New Testament converts, to Christian men and women to-day. It comes with the same authority; it is based on the same knowledge of man's needs; it carries the same complete assurance to the faithful.

Encouragement Conditional.—The fulfilment of the promise is no doubt conditioned by man's obedience. It is useless for us to invoke the power of God to help us in reaching the aims set by our own self-will. It is pre-

sumptuous for us to ask that the power of God should come in to correct the failures due to our own lack of care, of industry, of zeal, of perseverance. There is a type of spiritual arrogance which assumes that it is the business of God to condone and make up for the lack of energy, of foresight, of real fidelity in the discharge of duties. But what if the verdict in such cases be, " Thou wicked and slothful servant " ?

" *Be Strong* " *and Courageous.*—The encouragement is to " be strong." Not only the possession of strength but also its right use is implied. Strength with hardihood lies in the word used ; and strength is joined with courage. The particular tasks that lay before the new leader called for all the strength and all the courage that he could find. But are not strength and courage needed by us all ? If our tasks are not as great as those of Joshua they may be just as important to us, and those whom we may influence, as were the tasks of Joshua. We always need strength ; strength for resistance and strength for perseverance ; strength in patience and strength for enterprise ; strength when the more subtle temptations draw near in the times of prosperity and success, as well as strength in the days of adversity and sorrow. And courage too : courage to do the right when the right is unpopular ; courage to stand, if need be, alone " yet not alone " ; courage to attack difficulties and not to choose the easier road ; courage to believe that, within the limits of duty, we can do all things through Christ, that our God will never leave us nor forsake us, that His strength is sufficient for us, and His knowledge of our aims and endeavours is complete ; courage to go, with such strength and opportunity as He shall provide, until the hour comes when the Lord of the vineyard shall see fit to " call the labourers and give them their hire."

XXIX

THE SONG OF MOSES

Deut. xxxi. 16–xxxii. 43

THERE is nothing in Deuteronomy touched with deeper feeling than this Song. No criticism directed to enquiry as to its date need hinder in any part its message to our own time. No criticism can obscure its passionate conviction of the intimate relations between Jehovah and His people. It remains essentially a national deliverance, addressed to a particular nation; but it has also a permanent value for all who care to find in its history, and in its predictions, warning or encouragement for themselves.

A Song of Witness.—Its purpose is definite; it is a Song of Witness (xxxi. 19). For this purpose it recalls historical facts, and repeats the familiar. For the same reason it is predictive. When the sorrows foretold are come to pass, then the Song shall testify against a faithless people as a witness (xxxi. 21). As a witness it is to be handed down from generation to generation. The children were to learn it, just as children were to be taught the Song of the Bow (2 Sam. i. 18). No one shall be able to say that he did not know, had never heard, was but a sinner in ignorance. The Song shall be learned in childhood, and continue its warning all through life. The injunction points to an advantage which most people recognise. What is learned in childhood has a way of sticking in the memory. Childhood's prayers sometimes remain in the supplications of middle life. Hymns learned in childhood come back to memory, even with those who for long years have had no part in the singing of hymns. Like the Song of Moses, where they are remembered there they are a witness. There are, indeed,

still a few who hold that, as it was once put in the House of Commons, a child should be protected against the wish even of its parents to teach it in childhood anything of religion. But happily that theory has fallen into discredit, save where there is undisguised hostility to all faith.

A Song of Contrasts.—But this is not only a Song of Witness, it is also a Song of Contrasts. Jehovah, in His greatness, His stability, His justice, is contrasted with Israel, a " perverse and crooked generation." He has showered mercies upon them ; they have requited good with evil (vers. 4-6). Such a contrast might present itself to almost any mind which seriously examined itself before God. Any one might ask with the man of old, " What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me ? " (Ps. cxvi. 12), and then discover in his own ways enough of crookedness and perversity to humble him in the dust.

A Song of Sad Memories.—It is also a Song of Sad Memories. Jehovah had made Israel His people ; He had led them and kept them " as the apple of His eye " ; and in return the people had " waxed fat and kicked " ; they had turned to the worship of false gods ; they had " forgotten God that formed " them (vers. 15-18). Sad memories indeed ; for who can look back upon mercies disregarded, laws broken, warnings despised without regret for the blindness and perversity of the wrong-doers ? But contemplation of other people's folly will do us little service unless it leads to a recollection of our own failures, and a true gratitude to God for the mercy which has spared us some of the temptations that prevailed over other men, and for the grace that saved us from falling under the trials we had.

A Song of Warning.—It is also a Song of Warning. What if Jehovah should hide His face from His people, should " heap mischiefs upon them," should bring upon them famine and the sword, should " scatter them into corners," and " make the remembrance of them to cease

from among men " (vers. 19-28)? In after years they, who remembered the Song, would see how fully the warnings had been fulfilled. Possibly some may then have said to themselves, " If we had been alive in those days we should never had shown this folly. We should have heeded the warnings and have resisted the evil." Unhappily it is always easier to discern and condemn the folly of others than to recognise our own ; to be sure that we should have avoided the sins of other days, and not to see that we have to meet other but equally alluring temptations in our own. Social life in our time has its snares, which are just as perilous as the open idolatry or the gross sensuality of darker ages.

A Song of Discipline and of Restoration.—Finally this is a Song of Discipline and Restoration. Discipline shall be visited upon the people ; they shall be brought face to face with their resort to other gods, and forced to see the weakness of those rocks " in whom they trusted." Then in due season mercy will return ; the enemies shall be cast down ; the people of Jehovah shall see them suffer at His hand ; and towards His own He " will be merciful " (vers. 29-43). The story of others besides Israel is a story of discipline and of restoration. It is so with man under the new covenant. And there the emphasis is not on the judgement of God, or His vengeance on the enemies of faith. It is rather upon the abundant mercy revealed in Christ Jesus. It is not well that the justice of God should be obscured, or the violent opposer of all religions left to assume absolute and final immunity from punishment. But the follower of the Crucified Lord learns, at the foot of the Cross, to bear with patience whilst witnessing for the truth, and never to forget the depth of love which said, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

XXX

THE END OF THE TASK

Deut. xxxii. 44–52

A Last Appeal.—The Song is ended ; so is the work of Moses. Yet he cannot leave it without one last appeal (vers. 46, 47). It is a very brief but very pointed appeal, summarising much that had been more than once said. Such last appeals are sometimes remembered when prior exhortation has been neglected. A death-bed message has been known to reach a heart that had hitherto seemed unapproachable.

This message is soon given. There is a plea for attention. " Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day " (ver. 46) ; give them your attention, weigh them with care and intelligence. A reasonable request this, and based on intimate knowledge of those to whom it was addressed. There are times when a hearing, apparently sympathetic, is in reality no more than a polite show of interest. An attitude which outwardly suggests absorbing interest in a sermon or a speech or a personal appeal may, after all, cover in the hearer, thoughts which have travelled far afield, over matters of family concern, or business affairs, or vagrant speculations aroused by the surroundings of the moment. Moses wants no conventional attitude of regard, but a close and sincere attention.

A Plea Well Founded.—His plea is well founded. For the words spoken by Moses, the laws given, were " not a vain thing " (ver. 47), not matters of no importance or only of passing interest ; they were " your life "—the foundation upon which the religious and moral well-being of the people must rest, the condition of national pros-

perity and advancement. The words suggest to the reader another appeal, that of Samuel, also made upon an occasion of great national significance—" Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things He hath done for you " (1 Sam. xii. 24). Both appeals indicated the only way of safety, just as it is the only way of peace.

The Order of Release.—And after this last appeal comes the Order of Release (vers. 49, 50). Moses is summoned to ascend Mount Nebo and there to die. He is called apart. Yet still not apart from Jehovah; alone, yet like the " greater than Moses," not alone, " because the Father is with Me " (John xvi. 32). Every death is in this way lonely. The time comes to go apart, to climb, as it were Mount Nebo, and to go alone. The world of life and movement, the world of old occupations, the world of ties and affections, has to be left. There remain God, and the promised land; God the righteous Judge, and the land that is not to be entered in this life but is nevertheless an assured inheritance. And to Moses the summons may well have seemed an order of release. He might have desired to enter the new land with the rest; but, apart from that, he was gaining much. When the summons was answered, gone would be the weight of responsibility, the burden of care, not only for his own steps, but also for the deeds of a self-willed and fickle people. For them the new land; for him the new life. And as God ordained it so, all was well.

—*And its Reason.*—With the command came the reason for it. " Because ye trespassed . . . because ye sanctified Me not " (ver. 51). The reason had been stated before; it is repeated at the last. It is not always that God makes plain the precise cause of discipline that falls upon us. Sometimes the sufferer cries aloud that he does not know why this should have fallen upon him. He cannot identify the cause; he finds no satisfactory explanation. If he has no faith he may, and often does,

exclaim against God ; if he has faith he may say with one of old, " Blessed is the man whom Thou chasteneth, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law " (Ps. xciv. 12). He indeed sees in chastening the proof of love (Heb. xii. 6 ; Rev. iii. 19). No other explanation is demanded by him ; but if he thinks upon his own ways he can commonly find enough of wrong to justify any discipline. Moses can never have doubted the reality of his own offence ; the sadness discernible in his references to the discipline imposed is without tinge of resentment. He had long lived in close communion with God. His work had been marked out and directed for him. He had been a chosen instrument, but not an originator, a discoverer, or an independent authority. His tasks were defined, and his work had been done under orders, supervision and control.

Now the Authority above him wills that the office be laid aside. All is well, for the work was of His making, and it is for Him to say when the labourer shall be set free from his task. For Moses himself there was the assurance he proclaimed for the people, " The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms " (xxxiii. 27).

XXXI

THE LAST BLESSING

Deut. xxxiii

Commands, Ordinances, and Blessings.—Deuteronomy is a Book of commands and ordinances, of appeals and warnings. But it ends on a personal note, with large and generous blessings upon the tribes whom Moses had led. In many ways this benediction recalls the words of Jacob, when he gathered his sons together to foretell what should befall them " in the last days " (Gen. xlix). In both cases the blessings are farewell messages or predictions. The father in the one case, the leader in the other, looks far ahead. Each, standing on the brink of the grave, is a seer, mingling knowledge of the past with hopes or assurances of things to come. In the case of Jacob the blessing of the sons is prefaced by a family scene, in which the son who had come to great splendour visits his dying father. In the other the sovereignty of Jehovah over His people is presented in majestic terms.

The Case of Simeon.—In the case of Moses there is one striking omission from the list of the tribes. No place is found for Simeon. We are carried back to Jacob's denunciation (Gen. xlix. 5-7). The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children ; the tribe which at Sinai had been so numerous (Num. i. 23) had dwindled when the Shittim census was taken (Num. xxvi. 14). Families die out and are forgotten. The success of one generation is no guarantee of sustained prosperity ; what one has slowly gathered another may swiftly disperse. Tribes, like families, " come down in the world." Nations, like tribes, wax and wane, wane and come to comparative insignificance.

Blessings Various.—The blessings assigned or desired are varied in their character. There is here no uniformity of lot, as there is no uniformity of character or circumstance. So in the fellowship of Christ's kingdom there is no uniformity of endowment, of attainment, of mental or material possessions. A man poor in worldly possessions may daily enjoy blessings denied to a man of wealth. But it needs a true understanding of what "blessings" may mean rightly to understand God's way of bestowing them. He is happiest who leaves the choice of them in the hand of God, and asks, with Pope :—

> "Save me alike from foolish pride,
> Or impious discontent
> At ought Thy wisdom has denied,
> Or ought Thy goodness lent."

Privilege and Responsibility.—Here in the tribal blessings are great variety. There is privilege for Levi (vers. 8-11) ; high privilege the reward of tried fidelity. And high privilege means great responsibility. With those who minister the word and sacraments there are often associated ideas of dignity and privilege. It were better perhaps if, in the public mind, the association were rather with the burden of responsibility. It is no light thing to be called, as a familiar ordination service puts it, "to be Messengers, Watchmen and Stewards of the Lord ; to teach and to premonish ; to feed and provide for the Lord's family ; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for His children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever." Those who bear the burden of this responsibility cannot fail to remember its weight ; they would gain more help from their people if on the people's side there were always recollection of the burden. It would mean more abundant prayer for them, and more consideration in times of perplexity or trial.

Help from on High.—There is in Judah's case the blessing of divine assistance (ver. 7) ; a prayer for the help of the tribe, for its restoration, for its succour against foes. It is such a blessing as brings to mind the confident cry, " Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God " (Ps. cxlvi. 5). With the true heart this trust is not a thing of occasional resort; a recollection of God's power in time of dire need, coupled with much forgetfulness from day to day when things go well. It is rather the constant reference to God for guidance, and unfailing confidence in His dispositions. And with this goes the blessing upon Benjamin (ver. 12), with the assurance of security under the protecting hand of the Lord.

Prosperity, Advancement, and Power.—There are blessings of prosperity, advancement, and power. Reuben (ver. 6) shall live and not die out. The larger prosperity desired for some is not to be his ; but the tribe is to be spared extinction. By contrast the blessing of Joseph (vers. 13-17) covers both material possession and military prowess. Over against Reuben's dwindling strength is set the martial power of Joseph's sons. To Zebulun and Issachar (vers. 18, 19) are promised the rewards of enterprise and industry ; to Gad (vers. 20, 21) the rewards of the strong and the courageous, who had not shirked their duty towards their brethren ; to Dan (ver. 22) the quality of swiftly executed enterprise ; to Naphtali (ver. 23) the blessing of the Lord seen in fruitful lands ; to Asher (ver. 24) the happiness that comes to one beloved of parent and of brethren.

Where Security Lies.—The blessings are summed at the last in a triumphant ascription of power to the God of Israel, the refuge and saviour of His people (vers. 26-29). The security of the tribes does not lie in their numbers or their prowess ; it must come from their God. And herein is a very Christian reminder to all who ever are tempted to put their trust in the things they have acquired, or the

qualities they find in themselves. The wise will have confidence in another and better source of strength, and say of God, in the words of Agur the son of Jakeh, " He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him " (Prov. xxx. 5).

XXXII

"HE, BEING DEAD, YET SPEAKETH"

Deut. xxxiv

The Task Completed.—Poetic justice would have led Moses in triumph across the Jordan into the promised land. Poetic justice would have rounded off his career by placing him at the head of a grateful people triumphantly lodged in the country of their hopes. Divine order leaves him otherwise placed. He sees with his eyes the heritage of his people; he is forbidden himself to "go over thither." There in the land of Moab he died, and there he was buried. His work was done.

The Lonely Death.—The place of honour filled by Moses in the thoughts of his people is well shown by their feeling about his end. For some believed that he did not die, but was translated to heaven. Some, admitting death, held that the Lord buried him. Others kept to the belief that Moses buried himself, by retiring to a cave on the mountain top, and there, in a recess unknown to all, lying down to die. The unidentified place of death, the self-chosen rock-tomb, was seen to have a simple explanation. A known and accessible place of burial might have become a place of pilgrimage and of veneration. The dead Moses might have provoked some to infringe the first of the great commandments he himself had been charged to deliver.

An Honoured Life.—"He, being dead, yet speaketh." The life of no great nation can disclose a career more strangely varied or fuller of significant incident than that of Moses. Rightly considered, it abounds in appeal and warning to those who would serve God. And, rightly considered, that career ends fitly where it did. For the

great task to which he had been summoned was accomplished. His duty was to bring the people out of Egypt, and to lead them to the promised land. That he had done. It was a great achievement, greater perhaps than many would suppose. Only those could rightly gauge its difficulties who knew by experience how hard it is to get the best out of a people who have long suffered oppression. Peace and plenty bring familiar vices in their train. But oppression—with its accompaniments of injustice and cruelty, with its encouragement of duplicity and subservience, with its blight upon hope and high endeavour —can breed still worse degeneration. A weak nation, a nation impoverished in its moral qualities, needs a greater and stronger man at its head than a people born to freedom, self-reliance, and self-respect. Honour then to Moses.

—*Which tells of Divine Guidance.*—" He, being dead, yet speaketh." He bids us think on the over-ruling providence of God, so manifest in the life of Moses from the cradle to the grave. Such divine care requires in its subject obedience, and that in Moses was found. There are many who ask for divine guidance but prefer to guide themselves ; who affect to trust a providential care but in reality follow their own devices. Such could never have carried through the work of Moses.

—*Of Divine Protection.*—He speaks of divine protection. The life of Moses again and again presents him in positions of peculiar peril, and drawn safely out of them all. From how many dangers, perceived and unperceived, to body and soul have we not all been saved ! The simplest and most orderly life has had its moments of extreme peril ; but they have not always been recognised. The sudden accident, the sudden calamity, the sudden sickness, the sudden bereavement—we remark them in the case of others, and too often forget to give thanks that we ourselves have been spared the like.

—*Of Divine Justice.*—He speaks of divine justice, of sin and its punishment, of mercy and of pardon. And so

speaking Moses leads us on to a greater than himself, even to Christ. No other personage in the Old Testament foreshadows the work of our Lord as Leader of His people, as Messenger of God, as Mediator between God and man. And one decisive distinction between the two carries its own comfort to the Christian ; for if Moses sinned, Christ was sinless, and whilst the sinner could save no other soul, the Sinless " died for our sins " (1 Cor. xv. 3). Moses indeed offers us lessons from the life of the imperfect man, some of which lessons John Henry Newman sets out in simple verse in *Lyra Apostolica* :—

" Moses, the patriot fierce, became
The meekest man on earth,
To show us how love's quickening flame
Can give our souls new birth.

" Moses, the man of meekest heart,
Lost Canaan by self-will,
To show, where grace has done its part,
How sin defiles us still.

" Thou, Who hast taught me in Thy fear,
Yet seest me frail at best,
O grant me loss with Moses here
To gain his future rest ! "

Lessons for All.—The study of imperfect humanity refined, controlled, and fashioned anew by the grace of God, is open to all in the life of Moses. But so it is in the New Testament, where, to go no further, the stories of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John invite it along differing lines. It is a study very full of comfort to all, to the exceptional person but not less to the ordinary men and women of everyday life. It invites us, both in Deuteronomy and in the New Testament, to mark the clearness of the call, the ready obedience and the faithful endeavour, the grace of God being sufficient for all needs as duty was

presented. It is for us to seek and claim the same guiding and sufficient care.

Here the Book ends. Let us part from it with a familiar prayer :—

Blessed Lord, Who hast caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE END

Printed in Great Britain
by Turnbull & Spears, Edinburgh

THE
"R.T.S." DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY

The number of volumes already published in this series now exceeds 40. They deal with both the Old and New Testaments, and the authors include such able and competent writers as the late Rt. Rev. H. C. G. Moule, Bishop of Durham; Canon Dawson Walker, D.D.; the Rev. T. W. Gilbert, D.D.; the late Rev. Dr. Griffith Thomas; the Rev. Dr. J. D. Jones (of Bournemouth); the late Rev. J. M. E. Ross (editor of *The British Weekly*); the Ven. Archdeacon A. R. Buckland; the late Rev. F. B. Meyer, D.D., and Dr. Charles Brown.

The R.T.S. are engaged in completing the series, and a list giving particulars of the volumes already published as well as those in preparation, will gladly be sent, post free, on application.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

4 Bouverie Street, London, E.C. 4
135 Deansgate, Manchester

FOR BIBLE STUDY

Handbook to Old Testament Hebrew

Containing an Elementary Grammar of the Language, Reading Lessons, Exercises and Notes.

Edited by the REV. SAMUEL G. GREEN, D.D.

Demy 8vo.

"It will be found especially helpful to adult scholars studying Hebrew without the advantage of a teacher."—*The Guardian.*

"The grammar has been carefully prepared, and it will prove a useful aid to students of the sacred language."—
THE LATE CHIEF RABBI (Dr. Hermann Adler).

Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek Testament

Together with a Complete Vocabulary, and an Examination of the Chief New Testament Synonyms.

Illustrated by numerous Examples and Comments.

By the REV. S. G. GREEN, D.D.

Large crown 8vo.

A Brief Introduction to New Testament Greek

By the REV. S. G. GREEN, D.D.

Foolscap 8vo. Key as a separate volume.

Also the two volumes supplied complete.

THE R.T.S., 4, BOUVERIE STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

THE UNIVERSAL BIBLE COMMENTARY

EDITED BY THE
REV. C. H. IRWIN, M.A., D.D.

Medium 8vo. 576 pages.

"Really a marvel at the price. It contains an introduction to each book of the Bible, with brief notes on such texts as need elucidation. A short account is also given of the various books of the Apocrypha. It is a book which may be warmly commended."—*The Expository Times.*

"Fully abreast of the latest modern scholarship."—*The Scotsman.*

THE UNIVERSAL BIBLE DICTIONARY

Containing about 4500 Articles in 520 pages of two columns.

EDITED BY THE
VEN. ARCHDEACON A. R. BUCKLAND, M.A.

ASSISTED BY
CANON LUKYN WILLIAMS.

"A monumental work of marvellous cheapness." — *The Churchman.*

"Much sound scholarship has been used to the making of this book."—*The Times.*

PELOUBET'S BIBLE DICTIONARY

BASED UPON THE FOUNDATION LAID BY
WILLIAM SMITH.

EDITED AND BROUGHT UP TO DATE BY
F. N. PELOUBET, D.D.

ASSISTED BY
ALICE D. ADAMS, M.A.

Self-pronouncing. 500 Illustrations and Maps.

"The simple language of the exposition, together with the 500 illustrations and maps, make this dictionary an invaluable one for the Bible student and teacher."—*The Bookman.*

LONDON: THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

CRUDEN'S COMPLETE CONCORDANCE
TO THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

With Notes and Biblical Proper Names under
one Alphabetical arrangement by
ALEXANDER CRUDEN.

EDITED BY
C. H. IRWIN, M.A., D.D., A. D. ADAMS, M.A.
AND S. A. WATERS.

Containing upwards of 225,000 References.
800 pages. Medium 8vo.

"We heartily congratulate the Religious Tract Society on the issue of this 1930 edition of 'Cruden.' Edited on both sides of the Atlantic, its 225,000 references have been carefully revised. The explanatory notes are helpful and to the point. The style of printing and binding leaves nothing to be desired, and for a work which has involved such extreme care the price charged is very low."—*English Churchman.*

"The grouping of proper names with the general Concordance will be found an invaluable aid to quick reference. . . . This excellent volume."—*Church of England Newspaper.*

"The references are under one alphabetical arrangement, and the explanatory notes, while mainly in the language of Cruden, now embody the latest scriptural interpretations and the results of the most recent discoveries of archæology. The book is printed in clear type, is convenient to handle and is extraordinarily good value."—*The Guardian.*

LONDON: THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY